

the Spanish translation of L. del Paramo⁸ and in the French translation of P. Legrand.⁹ The latter occasionally has been consulted in my own translation.

I have translated all biblical quotations directly from the Greek. My notations to the text are deliberately eclectic. They cover matters of style and rhetorical devices, points of historical and theological interest, and textual questions. Parallels to other works of Chrysostom have been noted where they serve to illumine the meaning of the text, and classical allusions have been identified, where possible.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN A KING AND A MONK

1. Since I see that most people love and admire things that seem to be goods, rather than things which are by nature beneficial and truly good, I think that it is necessary to say a few words about both of them and to compare with each other both that which the multitude neglects and that which they zealously pursue. By thus coming to know the difference between the two, we will esteem the one as worthy of zeal and salvation and learn to despise the other as worthless.

So, then, on the one hand, people love power and glory, and the multitude considers blessed those who rule provinces, who ride in splendid coaches, who enjoy the shout of heralds and a great body-guard. On the other hand, the life of philosophers and of those who have chosen the solitary way of life is despised.¹ When the former appear, they attract everyone's attention. When the latter appear, they draw to themselves the eyes of no one, or of just a few. And no one wants to become like the latter, but everyone wants to be like the former.

But to possess power and to have command of a province is difficult and even impossible to most people, and those who wish to rule would

¹The word "philosophy" for Chrysostom and his contemporaries designated the ideal of Christian perfection. While the term sometimes refers specifically to the monastic life, especially in Chrysostom's early works, it by no means was restricted to that sense. See A.M. Malingrey, "*Philosophia*": *Etude d'un groupe des mots dans la littérature grecque des Presocratiques au IVe siècle après J.C.* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1961) 263-88, especially 284-86. See also G.J.M. Bartelink, "Philosophie" et "philosophe" dans quelques oeuvres de Jean Chrysostome," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 36 (1960) 486-92.

⁸*Tratados de San Juan Crisóstomo contra los perseguidores de los que inducen a otros a abrazarse con la vida monástica* (Barcelona, 1918).

⁹*Saint Jean Chrysostome. Contre les détracteurs de la vie monastique* Bibliothèque Patristique de Spirituelle (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1933).

need a great deal of money; but to choose the solitary life and to spend one's life in the service of God is easy and equally accessible to all. Moreover, the power of office is utterly destroyed along with this life, or rather it abandons those who desire it even while they live; indeed, already it has led some into great danger or disgrace. But the solitary life even now fills the just with many goods, and when this life is over, it conducts them glorious and joyful to the judgment seat of God the Father. Then the greater part of those who rule will be seen paying a great penalty for the actions of their lives.

Come, then, let us compare the goods of philosophy and the apparent benefits of power and glory in this life; let us examine closely the difference between these two goods, for they will be clearer when set side by side. Or, rather, if you wish, let us compare the greatest of goods—I refer to kingship—with philosophy; let us see the fruits of each possession, examining carefully that which the king commands and that which the philosopher commands.

So, then, the king rules over cities and regions and many provinces; with a nod of his head he commands generals and prefects and armies and peoples and senates. But the person who has given himself to God and who has chosen the solitary life rules over anger and envy and love of money and pleasure and the other evils, ever vigilant and watchful lest he allow his soul to submit to wicked passions and his mind to become enslaved to bitter tyranny. Having placed the fear of God in command over his passions, he constantly thinks only of the loftiest matters. Therefore, the king and the monk rule in ways such that it is fairer to call the monk a king than the one who wears a shining, purple robe and crown and sits upon a golden throne.

2. For he is a king who truly rules over anger and envy and pleasure, who commands all things under the laws of God, who keeps his mind free, and who does not allow the power of the pleasures to dominate his soul.² Such a one I would gladly see ruling peoples and earth and sea and cities and peoples and soldiers. For the person who has put the reasoning power of his soul in charge of his passions also

²Here Chrysostom borrows a phrase from Libanius' portrait of the emperor Julian. See Libanius, or. 12.101 (Förster 2, p. 45) and the discussion of these quotations in the introduction above, pp. 25-29. This is one of the several examples of such borrowings discovered by C. Fabricius, "Vier Libaniusstellen bei Johannes Chrysostomos," *Symbolae Osloenses* 33 (1957) 135-36; id., *Zu den Jugendschriften des Johannes Chrysostomos* (Lund: Gleerup, 1962) 118-21. See also my discussion in "Borrowings from Libanius in the *Comparatio regis et monachi* of St. John Chrysostom," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 39 (1988) 525-31.

will more easily rule over men as well with the divine laws, so that he will be to the ruled as a father, frequenting the cities with all kindness. But the one who seems to rule over men, but who is enslaved to anger and the love of power and pleasures, first will appear quite ridiculous to his subjects, since he wears a crown of gems and gold but is not crowned with moderation, since his whole body shines with a purple robe, but he has a disarrayed soul.³ Second, he will not even know how to administer his command. For if a person is unable to rule himself, how can he guide others rightly by the laws?

But if you wish also to see each one conducting himself in warfare, you will find the one fighting demons and prevailing and conquering and crowned by Christ.⁴ For he enters into battle with divine help, fortified with heavenly arms, so that victory inevitably comes to him, whereas the king fights with barbarians. As much as demons are more formidable than men, so much more glorious is the one who conquers the former than the one who overcomes the latter.

But if you wish to examine the cause of war in each case, you will find a great disparity. For the one battles demons for the sake of piety and the worship of God, desiring to snatch either cities or villages from error. But the other combats barbarians for the sake of siezing places or mountains or money, for avarice and desire for unjust power call him to battle. In such wars many kings, lusting for greater things, often have lost even what was present. Therefore, the power of each and the enemies of each have revealed what a great difference there is between the king and the person who is eager to spend his life in the service of God.

You can recognize them clearly by looking at each one's way of life and at their conduct during the day. For, in truth, you will find the one engaged with the prophets, adorning his soul with the wisdom of Paul, continually jumping about from Moses to Isaiah, and from Isaiah to John, and from John to another. But the king is continually involved with commanders and prefects and bodyguards. But when a person is continually engaged with others, he becomes like them in character. Accordingly, the monk models his disposition after the characteristics of the prophets and apostles, but the king after those of

³Fabricius, *Zu den Jugendschriften* 119, sees in the words "disarrayed soul" (ὑποστύς ἀτάκτου) the influence of Plato, *Gorgias* 506e.

⁴The monk as a warrior against demons was a popular theme in fourth-century monastic literature. See, for example, the combats described in Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 6.9 and Theodoret, *Religious History*, Prof. 4.6.

soldiers and bodyguards and armor-bearing men who are enslaved to wine, who gratify their pleasures, and who spend the greater part of the day drinking, knowing nothing noble or more proper to do on account of the wine.⁵ Therefore, this is another reason why it is fitting that the monastic life should be called blessed rather than the life spent in power and kingship.

3. But if we wished also to examine the nighttime, we would see the monk adorned with the worship of God and with prayers, singing much earlier than the birds,⁶ living with the angels, conversing with God, enjoying the goods of heaven. But he who commands many nations and peoples and armies, who rules over much land and sea, him you will see stretched out on a couch snoring. For the monk feeds on foods which do not demand a deep sleep, whereas luxurious food puts the king to sleep, and drink keeps him in bed even until day. Therefore, the monk has moderate clothing and food, and his table companions are athletes of virtue.⁷ But the king needs to be adorned with gems and gold; he must spread a glorious table and, if he is imprudent, employ companions who are worthy of his own wickedness. But if he is reasonable and temperate, perhaps they will be good and just, but still quite inferior to the virtue of the monks.

Therefore, even if a king philosophizes, he will not be able to approach even slightly the beauty and goodness of the monk.⁸ For even when travelling the king is burdensome to his subjects, when he dwells in the city, both in peacetime and wartime, when he exacts tribute and organizes armies and takes conscripts, when he conquers and when he is vanquished. For when he is vanquished, he fills his subjects with his own misfortunes, but when he conquers he becomes unbearable, adorning himself with trophies, becoming haughty, allowing his soldiers license to plunder, despoil, and injure wayfarers, to besiege idle cities, to ruin the households of the poor, to exact each day from those who have received him what no law allows, on the pretext of some ancient custom, illegal and unjust. And the king does

⁵The addiction of soldiers to drink was proverbial, though perhaps not inaccurate. See Libanius, or. 46.13-14 and the comments of R.A. Pack, *Studies in Libanius and Antiochene Society under Theodosius* (University of Michigan, 1935) 17.

⁶Singing much earlier than the birds" is another phrase which Chrysostom has borrowed from Libanius' descriptions of the emperor Julian. See Libanius, or. 12.94 (Förster 2, p. 42) and the discussion above, pp. 26-27.

⁷Another echo of Libanius: or. 13.44 (Förster 2, pp. 78-79).

⁸"Beauty and goodness" (καλοκἀγαθία) was a traditional description of noble character. Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 88c.

no harm to the wealthy with such evils, but he injures the poor, as if he were actually ashamed before the wealthy.⁹

But the monk does not act this way. As soon as he appears, he wins the favor of rich and poor alike; he approaches them each in the same way, using one cloak the whole year long, drinking water with greater pleasure than others drink marvellous wine,¹⁰ asking of the wealthy no favor for himself, neither great nor small, but for those in need he continually seeks many favors. He is a source of profit, both to those who provide and to those who intend to receive. Thus he is the common healer of rich and poor alike, freeing the former from sins through a good warning, relieving the latter's poverty.¹¹

But if the king orders a remission of taxes, he benefits the rich rather than the poor, whereas if he does the opposite he harms those who possess little. For harsh taxation would harm the wealthy a little, but it will sweep away the households of the poor like a torrent, filling the countryside with lamentation. And tax-collectors pity neither the elderly, nor widowed women, nor orphaned children, but they make merry the whole time, the common enemy of the countryside, exacting from the farmers what the earth has not produced.¹²

4. But now let us examine the benefits which the monk and the king bestow on their subjects. The one has gold, but the other the grace of the Spirit. The king alleviates poverty, if he is good, but the monk by his prayers will set free souls who are tyrannized by demons. And if it should happen that a person is distressed by such calamities,

⁹On the difficulties experienced by the citizens of Antioch in supporting imperial armies, see Libanius, or. 49.2 and the discussion in J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch, City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) 161-66.

¹⁰Here Chrysostom borrows from Libanius' description of Socrates in declamation 1, the *Apologia Socratis* (Förster 5, p. 24). See the discussion in the introduction above, pp. 27-28. A similar description of Socrates appears in Chrysostom's *Against the Opponents of the Monastic Life* 2.5, translated below pp. 107-8.

¹¹The social role of the monk as advocate for the poor has been admirably described by P. Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity." See the discussion above, pp. 12-13.

¹²In or. 2.32, dated 381, Libanius speaks of villages deserted because of harsh taxation. He adds, however, that the effects of the activities of the monks are worse: "Nowadays...you can go through miles of deserted farmland. The burden of taxation has emptied it and there is another and worse trouble besides,—that crew who pack themselves tight into caves, those models of sobriety, only so far as their dress is concerned." Tr. by A.F. Norman, *Libanius, Selected Works*, Loeb Classical Library, v. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977) 27.

he bypasses the king as if he were dead and flee to the dwelling of the monks, just as someone escaping a wolf flees to the hunter who carries a sword in his hand. For prayer is to a monk what a sword is to a hunter. In fact, a sword is not so fearsome to the wolves as the prayers of the just are to the demons. Therefore, not only do we flee to the holy monks in times of need, but even the kings themselves flee to them when they are afraid, like beggars to the houses of the wealthy in times of famine.

Did not Achab, the king of the Jews, during a famine and drought have hope of salvation in the prayers of Elijah?¹³ Did not Hezekiah, who held the same office and position, when he was sick and about to die, seeing death pressing upon him, flee to the prophet, as if he were mightier than death and a bestower of life?¹⁴ And once, when war had broken out and Palestine was in danger of being razed to its foundations, the kings of the Jews abandoned the army and infantry and archers and horsemen and generals and centurions and fled to the prayers of Elisha.¹⁵ For they thought that the servant of God could stand in place of many thousands. Hezekiah did the same thing when the Persian war was being fought: when the city had fallen into the greatest danger with respect to its foundations,¹⁶ as those at the walls trembled and feared and shook, as if in expectation of thunder or an earthquake shaking everything, the king set the prayers of Isaiah in opposition to the many thousands of Persians.¹⁷ And his hope did not deceive him! For as soon as the prophet raised his hands to heaven, God ended the Persian war with arrows from heaven.¹⁸ Thus God taught the kings to regard those who serve him as the common saviors of the earth, so that being exhorted by the just to every good and charitable action, they might learn to honor their counsels and obey good admonitions.

¹³Cf. 1 Kings 17-18.

¹⁴Cf. 2 Kings 20: 1-11.

¹⁵Possibly a reference to 2 Kings 3, although the details given by Chrysostom differ significantly from the biblical account.

¹⁶Fabricius, *Zu den Jügendschriften* 119, has identified this clause as a borrowing from Demosthenes, 26.11. Libanius imitates the same passage in or. 16.5 (Forster 2, p. 162).

¹⁷Cf. 2 Kings 19: 1-4.

¹⁸Cf. 2 Kings 19: 35-36. Chrysostom refers to the destruction of the Assyrian army of Sennacherib. The accounts in 2 Kings 19 and 2 Chronicles 32 do not speak of "arrows from heaven," but rather of "the angel of the Lord." See also Isaiah 36-37.

Furthermore, not only do the foregoing considerations allow us to see the difference between the king and the monk, but also if it should happen that both of them should fall—the one deprived of virtue and the other of kingship—the monk would come to his senses more easily and, after quickly rubbing away his sins through prayer and tears and grief and care for the poor, he would easily return again to his previous rule. But if the king should fall, he would require many allies and a great quantity of soldiers, horsemen, horses, money, and dangers. And his hope of salvation lies entirely in others. But the monk will have salvation immediately consequent upon his own will, zeal, and conversion of heart.¹⁹ For the kingdom of heaven, he says, is within you.²⁰

And death is fearsome to the king, but painless to the one who philosophizes. For the person who despises wealth and pleasure and luxury, for the sake of which the multitude desires to live, will necessarily bear more easily the departure from that state.²¹ But if it should happen that both of them are murdered, the monk will welcome dangers for the sake of piety, laboring for an immortal and heavenly life through death. But the king will have as his murderer some tyrant who lusts for power, and he will become a pitiable and horrible spectacle after the murder. But to see the monk murdered for the sake of piety is a sweet and saving spectacle. And the monk will have many who admire and imitate his goods and many disciples who pray to prove themselves his equal. But the king would utter many words in prayer, begging God that no one should appear desirous of kingship. Moreover, no one would dare to kill the monk, knowing that it would be impiety against God to snatch away such a person. But many murderers have attacked the king out of a desire for tyranny. That is why the king is guarded by soldiers, while the monk fortifies cities with his prayers, fearing no one. But the king lives in constant

¹⁹Like most of the Greek Fathers, Chrysostom has a positive estimation of the resources of human nature and the power of human choice (propeleia) for the good. See the comments of J. Dumortier, "Les idées morales de saint Jean Chrysostome," *Mélanges de science religieuse* 12 (1955) 30-32.

²⁰Luke 17:21. See Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 20 for a similar use of the Lukan text: "Greeks go abroad and cross the sea to study letters, but we have no need to go abroad for the Kingdom of Heaven nor to cross the sea to obtain virtue. The Lord has told us in advance: *The Kingdom of Heaven is within you*." Tr. by R.T. Meyer, *St. Athanasius, The Life of St. Anthony* (Ancient Christian Writers, 10 (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1950) 37.

²¹Another echo from Libanius, *Apologia Socratis*, decl. 1.3 (Forster 5, p. 15). See above, p. 28.

fear and anticipation of murder. For the one has a dangerous abundance, but the other a safe salvation.

Therefore, it seems to me that enough has been said about matters in the present life. But if we wished also to investigate the future contest, we will see the monk, glorious and admired, taken up into the clouds to meet the Lord in heaven, following the lead and instruction of all virtue and of that saving way of life. But even if the king appears to have administered his reign justly and with philanthropy (and this is very rare), he will receive the least degree of salvation and honor. For they are not equal; no, not equal are a good king and the monk who lives completely for the service of God. But if the king proves to have been wicked and ill-behaved, having filled the earth with many evils, who could tell the calamities which one could see afflicting him—burned, beaten, tortured, suffering such things which can neither be described in words, nor endured in reality?

Those who have pondered all these things and learned from them ought not to admire the wealthy. For the one who appears to be master of these things cannot approach even slightly the virtue of the monk. Therefore, whenever you see a rich man in fancy clothes, adorned with gold, riding in a carriage, making splendid processions, do not consider the man blessed. For wealth is transitory, and what seems to be good perishes along with this life. But when you see the monk walking alone, meek and humble and tranquil and gentle, emulate the man, show yourself to be an imitator of his philosophy, pray to become like the just man. For *ask*, he says, *and it will be given to you*.²² For these things are truly good and saving and lasting, through the philanthropy and providence of Christ, to whom be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

²²Matthew 7:7.

AGAINST THE OPPONENTS OF THE MONASTIC LIFE

Book One

When the children of the Hebrews had returned from their long captivity and wished to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem which had been razed to the ground many years earlier, certain cruel barbarians, who did not respect God for whom the Jews had erected the Temple, who did not pity the calamity of the people from which they had only recently been restored, who did not fear the punishment which God sends upon people who dare such deeds, first attempted on their own to hinder those rebuilding the temple.¹ But when these efforts failed, they sent a letter to their king in which they accused the city of Jerusalem of being rebellious, revolutionary and desirous of war, and they persuaded him to allow them to disrupt the building.² After receiving this charge from the king, and after providing themselves with a large cavalry, they interrupted the work for a while. Priding themselves on the great victory over which they ought to have grieved, they thought that their plot had come to a fine end.

But this was just the beginning, merely the prelude to the evils which were soon to befall them. For the work was completed and achieved an illustrious end. And those barbarians learned, and through them all learned, that whoever chooses to oppose those who desire to do something good—whether Mithridates or anyone else—opposes not simply human beings, but God himself who is honored by them.³ Nor is it possible for someone who opposes God to come to a

¹ See Ezra 4:1-5. Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.19-30.

² The text of the letter is given in Ezra 4:11-16. It is addressed to Artaxerxes I (464-423 BCE.).

³ Mithridates, one of the authors of the letter to Artaxerxes, was treasurer to Cyrus. See Ezra 1:8 and 1 Esdras 2:10, 15.

good end. Perhaps at the beginning of his reckless venture such a person will experience nothing terrible; but if he does not suffer immediately, God is calling him to repentance and allowing him to recover, as if from drunkenness. But if he persists in his drunken fit, deriving no profit from such forbearance, at least he will benefit others in the highest way, teaching them by his own punishment never to wage war against God, for no one escapes that invincible hand.

In any case, the enemies of the Jews were immediately beset by misfortunes so great as to obscure the tragedies in their scope.⁴ For after the bloodshed and immense carnage which they suffered at the hands of the Jews who had once been hindered, the earth became soaked to a great depth with the blood of the slaughtered men, and from this blood a great mire was formed. The bodies of the horses and the men were mingled together so that out of these bodies and out of the wounds inflicted on them such a great swarm of worms was produced that the earth was covered both with the pile of dead bodies and with the swarm of worms which covered the bodies. Anyone who saw this field would have said that there were not dead bodies lying beneath it, but rather many streams which produced this type of animal everywhere, for the swarm of worms gushed forth from that putrefaction with greater force than from any fountain. And this happened not merely for ten or twenty days, but for a long time.

Such was their punishment in this life. But what shall happen to them in the next life will be much worse than this. For then it will not be one thousand years, nor ten thousand, nor twice or three times that number, but for endless ages their reanimated bodies will be subjected to tortures and unspeakable suffering. And the blessed Isaiah knew of this double punishment; so, too, did Ezekiel, the seer of incredible visions; between them both they describe the punishments people suffer: one told of the punishments in this life, the other told of the hereafter.

2. But I have not recalled these events at this time for no reason, but because someone has come and announced to us harsh and bitter

⁴ The gruesome account which follows is found neither in the biblical version of Ezra, nor in Josephus or I Esdras. Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.114-119, adds only that the Samaritans were compelled to pay for sacrifices in the newly-rebuilt Temple. The battle scene is entirely Chrysostom's own creation; an example of a rhetorical 'ekphrasis,' or elaborate description. Such devices were exercises (ὑπομνησμοποιία) practiced by young men in the rhetorical schools. (Cf. the examples in Libanius, *Opera* (Forster 8, pp. 460-546); land battles, horse-races, drunkenness, harbor's, gardens, etc.

news, news which reveals great arrogance toward God. Certain people in our own day dare to do the very same deeds as those barbarians, indeed much more lawless deeds than they. On every side they drive away those who lead others to philosophy, and with many threats they forbid them to speak at all or to teach anyone anything like it. As soon as I heard this, I cried out and continually asked the messenger whether he said these things in jest. "Far be it from me," he said, "ever to joke about something like this! Nor would I even think of making up stories about such matters which I consider so important, and which I have prayed many times not even to hear now that they have happened."

Then I cried out more bitterly and said: "Truly, these events are even more sacrilegious than the efforts of Mithridates and all the rest, inasmuch as this temple is much holier and more sacred than that one. But who are these people, tell me, and where do they come from, those who dare to do such things? Why do they do it, for what sort of reason? For what purpose do they throw stones against the God of peace? Samsas and the Pharasthians and the leaders of the Assyrians and all the rest were barbarians, as their names indicate, and they were trained in a manner far different from the Jewish way of life.⁵ They did not wish to see their neighbors grow stronger, for they believed that the power of the Jews might in the future overshadow their own. But these people today, who have less freedom and more restricted license, have they any of the rulers as their accomplices in this bold undertaking? The opponents of the Jews had the Persian kings as their allies. But our rulers both desire and profess the opposite intentions, as I believe. That is why I am filled with so much distress when you say that such things were done in the middle of the cities while the emperors live in piety."⁶

Then he said, "If you think that is incredible, listen to this. Those who are doing such things pretend to be pious and call themselves Christian, and many of them have already been baptized. One of them, certainly inspired by the devil, even dared to say with his defiled tongue that he would withdraw from the faith and sacrifice to

⁵ "Samsas" (Dübner: Σάμας) is probably a reference to Shimshai (LXX: Σαμοὺ Σαμυά), a scribe who wrote the letter to Artaxerxes cited in Ezra 4:11-16. See Ezra 4:8-9, 17, 23. The "Pharasthians" (Dübner: φαρασθίαι) seems to refer to the "Apharsathachians" (LXX: Ἀφάρσθαθαι) mentioned in Ezra 4:9.

⁶ As noted above, the expression "to live in piety" (ἐν εὐσεβείᾳ ζῶντων) probably means "to be a Christian." See above, pp. 40-41.

demons. For he was choked with rage to see persons who are free, well-born and able to live in luxury being led to this harsh life."

When I heard this, I was struck with an even fiercer blow: foreseeing the sort of evils which would come of this, I lamented for the whole world and said to God: "Take my soul from me,⁷ relieve me of my distress, free me from this mortal life, and take me to that place where no one will ever speak to me about such a thing, nor will I ever hear of it. I know that one who departs this life enters the outer darkness where there is great wailing and gnashing of teeth. But I would rather hear teeth gnashing than people speaking words such as these."

Seeing me grieving so vehemently, he said: "Now is not the time for mourning. Your tears will never be able to recover those who have been lost or who are being lost, for I do not think that this horror will stop. But we must see to it that we do our part to extinguish the fire and stop the plague. And if you listen to me, you will put aside these lamentations and compose a speech which has advice for the sick and rebellious, for their own salvation and the common salvation of all people. And I will take this book and put it into the hands of the sick to serve in place of any other medicine, for many who are sick with this illness are friends of mine. They will allow me to approach them once, twice or frequently, and I know that they will swiftly be delivered from this plague."

"You are measuring our abilities," I responded, "according to the measure of your love. But I am not a skilled speaker and I would be ashamed to exercise my apparent talent for a purpose such as this.⁸ For I am now forced to display our sins to all the pagans, both those who live today and those who shall come, the very ones I am always ridiculing for their teachings no less than for the laxness of their way of life.⁹ If any of them should realize that among the Christians there are some people so hostile to virtue and philosophy that they not only refuse to labor for it, but do not even allow others to speak about it—indeed, not content with this degree of madness, if someone else should give advice and discuss this matter, they even drive him away

⁷ An echo of 1 Kings 19:4.

⁸ John's feigned reluctance to speak is an example of the rhetorical device, *diapophoric*. Such disclaimers served to call attention to the orator's eloquence, rather than to belittle it.

⁹ Chrysostom's term *ἑΑἰνέει* has been translated throughout as "pagans," a term which bears Chrysostom's negative connotations more readily than the English word "Greeks."

on all sides. If the pagans should realize this, I am afraid that they will think that we Christians are not human, but beasts and wild animals in human form, some wretched demons, and enemies of the common nature, and they will make this judgment not only about those who are responsible, but about our entire people."

Then he laughed and said: "You are joking when you say this. For I will tell you something even more serious than this, if you are afraid that the pagans will learn from your words what everyone learned long ago from the deeds. As if some wicked spirit had filled the souls of all, this topic of conversation is on everyone's lips. Go into the marketplace, go into the doctors' offices, go anywhere in the city where those who wish to do nothing regularly gather, and you will see everyone laughing. The subject of their laughter and jests are these stories of attacks against the holy men. Just as warriors, who have won many battles and erected monuments, love to tell of their exploits, so also do these people rejoice over their rash deeds. You will hear one saying: 'I was the first to lay hands on so-and-so monk, and I struck him.' Another says: 'I found his hut before anyone else.' But I stirred on the judge more than the rest," says a third. Yet another boasts of the prison and the terrors of the prison, and claims praise for having dragged these holy men through the marketplace. And on and on it goes. Then everyone breaks out in laughter at them. And these things happen in the gatherings of the Christians! And the pagans laugh both at the scoffers and at those who are scoffed at, at the former because of what they do, and at the latter because of what they suffer.

"Everywhere a sort of civil war reigns; indeed, it is much worse than civil war. For when those who have fought a civil war think back on it later, they utter many curses upon the ones who instigated it, and they attribute to some wicked demon everything which happened in the war. And the more involved a person was in that civil war, the more ashamed he is of his participation. But these people take pride in their accomplishments! And the present struggle is worse than civil war, not only because it is waged against holy persons who have done nothing wrong, but also because it is directed against those who do not know how to harm anyone and who are prepared only to suffer."

3. "Stop!" I said, "please stop! I have had enough of these stories, unless you want me completely to give up the ghost. But leave me while I have a little strength left. What you have enjoined on me by all means will be done. Only do not tell me any more stories, but go away and pray that the cloud of sadness over me will be lifted and that I will receive from God who is being attacked some strength so as to heal his attackers. He who loves all human beings will grant this, for

he does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he should repent and live."¹⁰

Having thus sent the man away, I began to write these discourses. If the only evil were that these holy and marvelous men of God are being dragged away and torn to pieces, drawn into the lawcourts, beaten and subject to the other outrages which I have just enumerated, and if no harm from these actions came to those who perpetrate them, I would not be upset at all about the matter, but I would find it amusing and enjoy a good laugh at their expense.

When little children strike their mothers without harming themselves, they provoke great laughter from those who are struck, and the angrier the child is when it does this, the more amused its mother becomes, until she breaks down and cries with laughter.¹¹ But if at some time the child strikes too often and too strongly and cuts its hand upon the sharp point of a broach fixed to the smock around its mother's waist, or upon a comb on her chest, then, to be sure, the mother stops laughing and feels greater pain than the child who struck her. And although first she heals the wound, she follows this with violent threats and forbids the child to do such things, so that it might not suffer that way again.

Therefore we would act as the mothers did, if we saw that the puerile anger and childish blows of these men brought no great harm to them. But in a short time, even if they do not realize it now because they are overcome by anger, they will weep and wail and lament, not as small children weep, but in the outer darkness and in the unquenchable fire. Therefore we will do as the mothers, with only this difference, that we will speak not with threats and violence as they did, but with cajolery and great indulgence towards these children, seeing that no harm comes to the holy men from them, but rather a greater reward and an increase of confidence. If we were to speak of future goods, you would laugh long and hard, since you are so used to laughing at such things. But even if you should love to laugh a thousand times over, you will not disbelieve in goods that are present.

¹⁰ Cf. Ezekiel 18:23, 32. Chrysostom uses the single Greek word *φιλανθρωπία* to describe God's love for the human race. (On the significance of this expression in his works, see M. Zitrnik, "Θεὸς φιλανθρωπός ἐστι Ἰωάννης Χρυσόστομος," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 41 (1975):76-118.)

¹¹ Metaphors from everyday life, especially the example of infants, were favorite rhetorical techniques of the philosophical diatribe. See A. Urey, "La doctrine morale de saint Jean Chrysostome dans le Commentaire sur saint Matthieu et ses affinités avec la diatribe," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 27 (1957), section spéciale, 10.

And even if you wanted to, you could not, since the facts themselves would contradict you.

You certainly have heard of Nero, for the man was notorious for his licentiousness; he was the first and only one in such high office to discover new modes of intemperance and immorality.¹² This Nero brought the same charges against the blessed Paul (for Paul was a contemporary of Nero) which you now bring against these holy men. For Paul had persuaded Nero's mistress, whom the emperor loved dearly, to accept his preaching of the faith, and likewise to cease from that impure intercourse. Nero brought the same charges against Paul and called him the same names which you utter, such as "corrupter" and "seducer" and the like. First he imprisoned Paul; and when he could not persuade him to stop advising the girl, he finally had Paul killed. But what harm came from this to the one who suffered wrong? And what benefit to the one who acted wrongly? What benefit did not accrue to Paul who was killed? What harm did not come to Nero who had him killed? Paul is honored everywhere on earth as an angel (for now I am speaking of the present life). But everyone considers Nero to be a corrupter and a vicious demon.¹³

4. As for the consequences in the next life, even if you are an unbeliever, I must speak for the sake of the those who are believers, although you ought to believe on the basis of punishments in this life. Nonetheless, however you are disposed to the matter, we will speak and keep nothing hidden. What, then, will happen in the next life? That wretched and miserable Nero, squalid and dejected, covered with shame and gloom, all bent over, will be banished to that place where the worm does not die and where the fire is never extinguished.¹⁴ But the blessed Paul will stand with great confidence before the throne of the King, shining brilliantly, clothed in glory inferior to none of the angels and archangels, and he will receive the reward that befits a man who has given up his body and soul in order to please God.

¹² The use of historical examples is a typical feature of sophistic rhetoric. See H. Marrou, "Diatribe," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 3 (1957) 998. The details of Chrysostom's account of Paul and Nero are derived from the apocryphal *Acts of Peter and Paul*. See J. Rougé, "Néron à la fin du IV^e et au début du V^e siècle," *Latomus* 37 (1978) 82. Cf. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, v. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 575.

¹³ According to Rougé, Nero was generally treated with disdain by both pagan and Christian historians in Chrysostom's day. See "Néron," 73-84.

¹⁴ Cf. Mark 9:48, quoting Isaiah 66:24.

This is how the matter stands: a great recompense awaits those who do good works, but this reward is better and greater when those who do the good works have had to experience danger and great dishonor. Even if the same virtuous deed is accomplished by one person without a struggle and by another with struggles, nevertheless they will not be crowned with the same honor.¹⁵ It is the same in the case of warfare. A soldier is crowned for raising the standard, but much greater honor is given to the soldier who is wounded in the process of raising the standard. And why do I speak about the living, when even those whose only act of virtue is to have died courageously in war, and who have done nothing else to benefit their countrymen, are honored throughout all of Greece as saviors and patrons?

But perhaps you also are ignorant of these matters, since your constant preoccupation is laughter and pleasure. But if the pagans, who have no sound understanding at all, bear witness to this practice, and honor with great honor those who have done nothing but die for them, how much more will Christ do this, who from his great abundance always offers surpassing gifts and rewards to those who undergo dangers for his sake? For he has offered a reward [for bearing] not only persecutions, beatings, prisons, murders, and slaughter, but also mere insolence and abusive language. These are his words: *Blessed are you when people hate you and when they set you apart and abuse you and reject your name as evil for the sake of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and exult, for behold your reward will be great in heaven.*¹⁶

So, then, if suffering physical and verbal abuse brings a greater reward to those who suffer it, the one who prevents them from suffering will benefit not the victims, but those who cause their suffering. Indeed, he harms the victims by eliminating their extra reward and removing the grounds for their rejoicing and exultation. So, for their sake we should be silent and allow to happen that which brings them a wealth of goods and a greater confidence. But, on the other hand, since we are members one of another, even if they refuse the favor once again, in view of our relationship we should not care for one part of the body and neglect another. For the virtuous will find another occasion to gain merit, even if they do not suffer evil now;

¹⁵ Chrysostom's term for a "virtuous deed" (*katophthama*) is derived from Stoic ethics. See I. von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, v. 3 (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1903; reprinted 1979) 134, l. 24: *κατοφθάματα δὲ τὴν ἐνέργησιν, ὅσον τὸ φρονεῖν, τὸ δίκαιον παρὰ τὸν ἀρετὴν* (Stobaeus, *Eclogues* II.85, 13).

¹⁶ Luke 6:22-23.

whereas if these others do not stop their attacks, they will lose all hope of salvation.

For this reason, I will overlook the interest of the former and insist on yours, and I ask and beg you to listen to our exhortations and to stop thrusting the sword against yourselves. Do not kick against the goad, do not sadden the Holy Spirit, thinking that you merely torment humans. I know for certain that eventually you will approve this opinion of ours even if you do not do so now. But I want you to do this now, so that later you do not do so in vain.

That rich man, when he was still alive, thought that the law and the prophets and the exhortation which they contain were myth and nonsense.¹⁷ But when he went to the next life, he so marvelled at their advice that even though he realized he could no longer benefit from praising them, he entreated the patriarch Abraham to send someone from Hades to carry the message to those on earth. He was afraid that others would suffer the same fate as he, that they would ridicule the sacred scriptures and marvel at them only when it was too late to benefit from marvelling. And yet that man did nothing comparable to what you are doing. If he did not share any of his goods with Lazarus, at least he did not prevent others who wished to share with him, nor did he drive them away as you are doing now.

And not only do you surpass him in this cruelty, but in another as well. Just as to refrain from doing good and to prevent others from doing good when they wish are not equal offenses, likewise it is not the same thing to deprive someone of bodily nourishment and to prevent someone with a great hunger for philosophy from being nourished by others. Therefore you outdo that cruel rich man in two ways: you prevent others from satisfying the poor man's hunger, and you display this inhumanity when a soul is being strangled.

The Jews also did this once, when they prevented the apostles from speaking to people words which would lead to salvation. But you are even worse than they. For they had assumed the role of enemies when they did all these things. But you masquerade as friends and act like enemies. At that time the Jews beat the holy apostles and insulted them and defamed them, calling them magicians and seducers. But such a punishment came upon them that no calamity could ever be compared to their sufferings. For they were the first and only people

¹⁷ Cf. Luke 16:19-31. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man was an abiding source of Chrysostom's reflections on the moral life. See the *De Lazaro conciones* 1-7 (PG 48:963-1054) and *In quadragesimum Lazarum* (PG 48:779-84).

under the sun to have suffered in this way. Christ himself was a trustworthy witness of these events when he said: *There will be a great tribulation such as has not happened from the beginning of the world until now, and never will be.*¹⁸

Now is not the time to go through all their sufferings, and yet we should say a few things out of the many. But I will speak not my own words, but those of a Jewish man who accurately recorded their own affairs. What, then, did he say? When he had narrated the burning of the Temple, he announced these new calamities:¹⁹

Such was the condition of affairs in the vicinity of the temple. Meanwhile, the victims perishing of famine throughout the city were dropping in countless numbers and enduring sufferings indescribable. In every house, the appearance anywhere of but a shadow of food was a signal for war, and the dearest of relatives fell to blows, snatching from each other the pitiful supports of life. The very dying were not credited as in want; nay, even those expiring were searched by the brigands, lest any should be concealing food beneath a fold of his garment and feigning death. Gaping with hunger, like mad dogs, these ruffians went staggering and reeling along, battering upon the doors in the manner of drunken men, and in their perplexity bursting into the same house twice or thrice within a single hour. Necessity drove the victims to gnaw anything, and objects which even the filthiest of brutes would reject they condescended to collect and eat: thus in the end they abstained not from belts and shoes and stripped off and chewed the very leather of their bucklers. Others devoured tufts of withered grass: indeed some collectors of stalks sold a trifling quantity for four Attic drachmas. But why tell of the shameless resort to inanimate articles of food induced by the famine, seeing that I am here about to describe an act unparalleled in the history whether of Greeks or barbarians, and as horrible to relate as it is incredible to hear? For my part, for fear that posterity might

¹⁸ Matthew 24:21.

¹⁹ Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.192-214. Translated by H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus*, v. 3. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928) 433-39. Next to Plato, Josephus is the Greek prose writer most often cited by Chrysostom. See P.R. Coleman-Norton, "St. John Chrysostom's Use of Josephus," *Classical Philology* 26 (1931) 85-89. [Reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Loeb Classical Library from *Josephus*, v. 3, H. St. J. Thackeray, translator, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928).]

suspect me of monstrous fabrication, I would gladly have omitted this tragedy, had I not innumerable witnesses among my contemporaries. Moreover, it would be a poor compliment that I should pay my country in suppressing the narrative of the woes which she actually endured.

Among the residents of the region beyond Jordan was a woman named Mary, daughter of Eleazar, of the village of Bethzuba (the name means "House of Hyssop"), eminent by reason of her family and fortune, who had fled with the rest of the people to Jerusalem and there become involved in the siege. The bulk of her property, which she had packed up and brought with her from Peraea to the city, had been plundered by the tyrants; while the relics of her treasures, with whatever food she had contrived to procure, were being carried off by their satellites in their daily raids. With deep indignation in her heart, the poor woman constantly abused and cursed these extortioners and so incensed them against her. But when no one either out of exasperation or pity put her to death, weary of finding for others food, which indeed it was now impossible from any quarter to procure, while famine coursed through her intestines and marrow and the fire of rage was more consuming even than the famine, impelled by the promptings alike of fury and necessity, she proceeded to an act of outrage upon nature. Seizing her child, an infant at the breast, "Poor babe," she cried, "amidst war, famine, and sedition, to what end should I preserve thee? With the Romans slavery awaits us, should we live till they come; but famine is forestalling slavery, and more cruel than both are the rebels. Come, be thou food for me, to the rebels an avenging fury, and to the world a tale such as alone is wanting to the calamities of the Jews." With these words she slew her son, and then, having roasted the body and devoured half of it, she covered up the remainder. At once the rebels were upon her and, scenting the unholy odor, threatened her with instant death unless she produced what she had prepared. Replying that she had reserved a goodly portion for them also, she disclosed the remnants of her child. Seized with instant horror and stupefaction, they stood paralysed by the sight. She, however, said, "This is my own child, and this my handiwork. Eat, for I too have eaten. Show not yourselves weaker than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother. But if you have pious scruples

and shrink from my sacrifice, then let what I have eaten be your portion and the remainder also be left for me." At that they departed trembling, in this one instance towards, though scarcely yielding even this food to the mother. The whole city instantly rang with the abomination, and each, picturing the horror of it, shuddered as though it had been perpetrated by himself. The starving folk longed for death, and felicitated those who had gone to their rest ere they had heard or beheld such evils.

The horrible news soon spread to the Romans. Of them some were incredulous, others were moved to pity, but the effect on the majority was to intensify their hatred of the nation.

This is what the Jews suffered, and evils much worse than this, not only because they crucified Christ, but also because afterwards they prevented the apostles from speaking about our salvation.²⁰ This is the charge which the blessed Paul levelled against them when he prophesied that evil would befall them, saying that *the wrath has come upon them at last*.²¹

"And what does this have to do with us?" you say. "We do not drive them away from the faith or from preaching."²² And what benefit is the faith, tell me, unless there is also a pure way of life? But perhaps you do not even know about this, since you are so ignorant of all our matters. But I will enumerate for you the declarations of Christ. Observe carefully if people are never blamed for their way of life, and if punishments are determined only for faith and doctrines. For when he had ascended the mountain and seen the great crowd flowing all around him, after issuing the other counsels, Christ said: *Not everyone*

²⁰ The destruction of the Jewish Temple was an event of considerable theological significance to Chrysostom, especially in his eight sermons against Judaizing Christians. For a recent discussion, see R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews. Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), especially 128-60.

²¹ 1 Thessalonians 2:16.

²² From this point on throughout the treatise Chrysostom will employ a dialogue technique of argumentation (*diaktesis*). This was a question and answer method in which the orator pretended to argue with an imaginary opponent. The method is often associated with the diatribe of Stoic and Cynic preaching, but it also was widely used by the sophists, especially Libanius. See H. Hebbel, "Chrysostom and Rhetoric," *Classical Philology* 19 (1924) 261-76 and B. Schabert, *Libanius. Discours nouveaux* (Paris, 1973) 33-36.

who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father."²³ And, Many will say to me on that day, "Did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and work many wonders in your name?" And then I will confess to them, "Get away from me, you workers of iniquity, I do not know you."²⁴ And he said that a person who hears his words, but does not put them into practice, is like a foolish man who built his house upon sand, rendering it vulnerable to floods and rains and winds.²⁵ And while discoursing in another place, he said: "Just as fishermen, when they have drawn in their nets, separate out the poor fish, so it will be on that last day when the angels throw into the furnace all those who have sinned."²⁶ And when discussing people who are licentious and impure, he said: *They will go to that place where the worm never dies and the fire is never extinguished*.²⁷ And again, *A king gave a wedding feast for his son and seeing a man wearing a dirty garment, he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without having a wedding garment?"* And the man had nothing to say. Then, he said to his servants, "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness."²⁸ This is how he threatens the licentious and intemperate. Likewise, the virgins who were shut out by the bridegroom suffered this because of their cruelty and inhumanity.²⁹ And others for the same reason have gone to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.³⁰ And those who speak rashly and without purpose will be condemned. For by your words, he said, you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.³¹

Do you think, then, that we are mistaken to be anxious about a way of life, and to be so concerned about the more ethical part of philosophy? I do not think so, unless you would maintain that Christ said all this and more than this for no reason, for I have not said everything. And if I were not afraid of prolonging my speech, I would have taught from the prophets, from the blessed Paul, and from the other apostles how much concern God himself has shown for the moral

²³ Matthew 7:21.

²⁴ Matthew 7:22-23.

²⁵ Cf. Matthew 7:24-27.

²⁶ Cf. Matthew 13:47-50.

²⁷ Mark 9:48.

²⁸ Matthew 22:12-13.

²⁹ Cf. Matthew 25:1-13.

³⁰ Matthew 25:41.

³¹ Matthew 12:37.

life. But I think that what has been said is enough, or rather, even a small fraction of what was said should have been sufficient. For when God declares something, even if he speaks only once, what he says should be accepted as if it had been uttered many times.

7. "What, then?" you say, "are not those who stay at home able to accomplish the virtuous deeds needed to avoid punishment?" I myself have wished for this, no less than you, indeed, much more than you. Often I have prayed that there would be no need of monasteries and that such good order would reign in the cities that no one would ever be forced to flee to the desert. But now the reverse is the case, and the cities, where there are courts of justice and laws, are filled with much lawlessness and injustice, whereas the desert blossoms with the abundant fruit of philosophy. Therefore, you should not prosecute the persons who rescue those who desire to be saved from this storm and confusion and who guide them into the quiet harbor. Rather, you should indict those who render every city so difficult and unsuitable for philosophy that those who wish to be saved are compelled to seek out the desert places.

Tell me, if someone takes a lamp in the middle of the night and sets fire to a large house full of people, trapping those who are sleeping inside, who is the wicked person, in your estimation: the one who awakens the sleepers and leads them out of the burning house, or the one who set the fire in the first place and created the desperate situation for those inside and for the person leading them out? If someone sees a city suffering under tyranny, sick and rebellious, and persuades some of its inhabitants to flee to the mountain tops, and if, in addition to persuasion, he also assists their withdrawal,³² whom would you accuse: the one who rescued the suffering citizens from that storm and led them into this quiet harbor, or the one who caused their shipwreck?

Do not imagine that human affairs are now in a better state than a city under tyranny; indeed, they are much worse.³³ For it is not a human being, but a wicked demon who has seized the entire world like

³² "Withdrawal" (ἀναχώρησις) by Chrysostom's time was a technical term for departure into the monastic life. See G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961) 129. The term also had a long history in Greek philosophy. See the helpful discussion in A. J. Festugière, *Personal Religion Among the Greeks* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954) 54-67.

³³ The following paragraph is another lengthy ἑκφρασις, combining the common places of both tyranny and drunkenness. Both are τόνοι found in Libanius' *ἡγοιυμνάσματα* (Förster 8, pp. 195-208, 477).

a savage tyrant and with his entire phalanx has invaded human souls. From there, as if from a fortress, each day he sends forth his polluted and accursed commands to all, not only tearing apart marriages, not only buying and selling, not only committing wicked murders, but also much worse deeds than these. He snatches souls which were once betrothed to God away from their union with Him and hands them over to his impure minions, forcing them to share in wicked intercourse. Once they take hold of the soul, they consort with it shamefully and arrogantly, as is the custom of the wicked demons who violently and madly desire our shame and ruin. They strip the soul of all its garments of virtue, and clothe it in the foul, torn and ill-smelling rags of wickedness, so that the soul is even more shameful clothed than naked; and when they have infected the soul with all their wickedness, they ceaselessly march against it with violence. And they are never satisfied with this disgusting and lawless intercourse. But just as drunkards, when they have imbibed a great amount of drink, are stimulated all the more, likewise these demons rage all the more and attack the soul more fiercely and more cruelly, the more they abuse it. They prick it and bite it on all sides, they pour their poison into it and do not stop until they have transformed the soul into their own image, or have seen it separated from the body.

Therefore, what tyranny, what captivity, what ruination, what servitude, what war, what shipwreck, what famine could be worse than this? Who is so cruel and so vicious, who is so stupid and inhumane and lacking in compassion and unfeeling that he does not wish to free from this accursed madness the soul which suffers this outrageous abuse, as far as it is in his power, but who would instead allow it to suffer in this way? And if this is the action of a cruel and hard-hearted soul, where, tell me, shall we rank those who, in addition to neglecting the good, do something far worse? Not only do they not praise or approve holy men who are eager to leap into the midst of dangers, who do not refuse to lay hands upon the very throat of the wild beast, but who endure foul smells and dangers in order to draw up out of the very throat of the demon the souls who have already been gulped down—but they even drive them away on all sides and make war against them!

8. "What then?" is the reply. "Will all who live in the cities perish, tossed by a storm? Must everyone leave the cities and desert them to flee to the desert and populate the mountain tops? Is this what you are commanding, is this the law you are laying down?" Not at all! As I said before, it is exactly the opposite that I wish, and I pray that we would enjoy such peace and freedom from the tyranny of these evils

that not only would the city dwellers have no need to flee to the mountains, but also that those who inhabit the mountains, like fugitives returning from a long exile, would return to their native cities. But what can I do? If I rush to bring them home, I am afraid that I will betray them into the hands of wicked demons instead and that, in my desire to lead them out of solitude and flight, I will cause them to fall from philosophy and tranquillity.³⁴

But if, by referring to the great number of people who live in the city, you think you can shame me and frighten me, so that I will not have the courage to condemn the whole world, I will meet your objection by citing the decree of Christ. For you will not be so arrogant as to oppose the decision of the One who is to judge us. What, then, does Christ say? *Narrow is the gate and rough the road which leads to life, and few are those who find it.*³⁵ But if those who find this road are few, much fewer are those who are able to arrive at its end. For not everyone who sets out at the beginning will have the strength to reach the end. Some will be thrown into the sea at the start of the voyage, others in the middle, and others even as the ship enters the harbor. Moreover, he says that many are called, but few are chosen.³⁶ When Christ declares that the greater part will be destroyed and that only a few will be saved, what quarrel do you have with me? This is what you are doing: it is as if you were astonished at the story about Noah—that all but two or three perished in the flood—and expected this to silence us so that we do not dare to condemn the crowd. But we will not change our mind, nor will we value the multitude more highly than the truth.

What is happening now is no less serious than what happened in the time of Noah; indeed it is more reprehensible because people today have been threatened with gehenna, and yet their vices do not decrease. For who, tell me, does not call his brother a fool? But this renders a person liable to the fire of gehenna.³⁷ Who does not look at a woman with lustful eyes? But this is equivalent to adultery, and the adulterer must be thrown into the same gehenna.³⁸ Who has not sworn an oath? But this is always from the evil one, and what is from

³⁴ According to Fabricius, *Zu den Jugendschriften* 126, the expression "to fall from philosophy" (φιλosophία . . . ἐκπεσεῖν) is rare; it is found only in Plato, *Republic* 496b-c and in Plutarch, *Moralia* 47c and 52d.

³⁵ Matthew 7:14.

³⁶ Cf. Matthew 20:16.

³⁷ Cf. Matthew 5:22.

³⁸ Cf. Matthew 5:28.

that evil one is always worthy of punishment.³⁹ Who has never been envious of a friend? But this makes people worse than the Gentiles and tax collectors, and it is quite clear to all that those who are worse than these cannot escape punishment. Who has expelled from his heart all anger and forgiven the sins of all who have offended him? But no one who has heard Christ will deny that the person who has not forgiven must be handed over to the torturers. Who has not been enslaved to mammon? But to serve mammon requires that one abandon the service of Christ, and whoever renounces the service of Christ by necessity renounces his own salvation. Who has not secretly spoken slander? But even the Old Law commands such persons to be killed and slaughtered.

But what consolation is there in the recital of our own evils? That all have fallen into the pit of wickedness, as if by a prior agreement, this itself is the greatest evidence of the sickness which has now taken hold; but when we are consoled by the fact that our evils are shared, this is cause for even greater grief. For to have many companions in sin does not acquit us of accusations and punishments. And if someone feels discouraged by what we have said, let him wait a little while and then despair even more when we speak of things much worse than these, such as false oaths. For if swearing an oath is diabolic, what sort of punishment do you think misusing oaths will bring upon us? If calling someone a fool brings on gehenna, what punishment awaits the person who constantly abuses and insults the brother who has done him no harm. If only to remember past injuries merits punishment, what sort of torture awaits those who take vengeance?

But now is not the time for these matters; they will be treated in their proper place. To get to the point, is not the very event which compelled us to compose this speech alone sufficient to reveal the evil of the present disease? If ignorance of one's own sins and the ruthless pursuit of wrongdoing is the absolute height of wickedness, where shall we rank those new lawmakers of this recent and most strange legislation, who drive away the teachers of virtue with greater confidence than others drive away teachers of wickedness, and who attack those who try to live well rather than those who act wickedly? In fact, they never accuse or oppose wrongdoers, but they even enjoy their company, all but shouting through their words and deeds that one should embrace wickedness and never return to virtue, so that it

³⁹ Cf. Matthew 5:34.

is fine to take revenge not only against those who pursue virtue, but also against those who dare to utter a sound about it.

Book Two

To the Pagan Parent

1. So then, what we have said is enough to cause astonishment and shuddering. And if someone should apply these words of the prophet to this situation, that *heaven was astonished over this, and the earth shuddered exceedingly*,¹ and *there was astonishment and shuddering over the earth*,² this would be an appropriate description. But there is something even worse than this: it is not only strangers and those who are unrelated who become so upset and angry when the youth receive good advice, but parents and relatives who are enraged at this. I am aware that many people do not find it at all surprising that the parents act this way; instead they say that they are angered when they see persons who are neither parents, nor loved ones, nor relatives, nor friends, and who frequently even are unknown to those who choose to philosophize, suffering just as the parents do and even surpassing them in annoyance, opposition and accusations against those who persuaded them.

But the very opposite seems astonishing to me. For it would not be strange for those who are neither guardians nor friends to be distressed over another person's goods, conquered by envy and believing that the other's ruin is their own deliverance from misfortune—such thoughts are wretched and miserable, but so they think nonetheless. But when those who have borne children, who have raised them, who pray each day to see their children become more distinguished than themselves, who do and suffer everything for

¹ Jeremiah 2:12.

² Jeremiah 5:30.

advice from someone else, they set aside their own opinion concerning their own children and follow another's suggestion. Therefore, they should not be annoyed with us, if we say that we know better than they what is beneficial for the children. And if we do not prove this through our speeches, then they may accuse us, then they may attack us as imposters, corrupters and enemies of the entire human race.

2. What, then, will be clear proof, and how will we know who really sees what is beneficial, and who seems to see, but really does not see at all? Let us force these words of mine, as well as the opposing arguments, to undergo scrutiny and enter into combat,⁵ and let us submit them to examination by unbiased judges. Now, the rule of the contest requires us to disrobe and to compete only against Christian opponents, and it demands nothing more of us. As the blessed Paul said: *For what have I to do with judging outsiders?*⁶ But since it happens that many of those who are drawn towards heaven are the children of pagan parents, even though the rule of the contest exempts us from doing battle with them, nonetheless we shall willingly and enthusiastically prepare to compete against them first. And I wish that our struggle were only against the pagans, although to fight them is more difficult and more intricate.⁷ *For the natural man does not perceive the things of the Spirit, for it is foolishness to him.*⁸

This is our dilemma: we must persuade a person to desire a kingdom when that person at the outset does not wish to believe that the thing exists. However, even though our arguments must be made within such narrow confines, I would prefer to do battle only against the pagans. Against a Christian we have many legitimate arguments at our disposal, and yet the excess of embarrassment far overshadows the pleasure which comes from the abundance of fair grounds. For I am ashamed to have to fight with a Christian over these matters. This alone, I am afraid, gives the pagan a legitimate complaint against me, for in other matters we easily conquer him by the grace of God. But if he is willing to be reasonable, we shall quickly convert him not only to a love of that way of life, but also to the same

⁵ The phrase "to enter into combat" (συμπλακῆναι) refers to wrestlers locked in combat. On the preponderance of athletic metaphors in Chrysostom, see J.A. Sawhill, *The Use of Athletic Metaphors in the Biblical Homilies of St. John Chrysostom* (Princeton, 1928).

⁶ 1 Corinthians 5:12.

⁷ Literally "has more holds" (ἡλεονας ἔχει λογας), another wrestling metaphor. Chrysostom refers to the twists and turns of the argument.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:14.

enthusiasm for the doctrines which are the foundation of this way of life. So far am I from being afraid of a contest with him, that I will enter the combat myself only after I first have presented my opponent in the most favorable light.

Imagine that this parent is not only a pagan, but is also the wealthiest of men, admired and possessing great power.⁹ Suppose that he has many fields, many houses, thousands of talents of gold. Assume that he comes from a most regal homeland, and a most illustrious family. Imagine that he has no other children, nor hope of any more, but that he depends on this one child alone. And suppose that this young man also has good hopes, that he expects to rise quickly to power, to surpass his father in splendor, and to outdo him in all worldly matters.¹⁰

Then in the midst of these hopes, someone comes and discusses this philosophy with him. Imagine that he persuades the young man to laugh at all these things and to put on a rough cloak, to leave the city and flee to the mountains, and there to plant and irrigate and carry water and do all the other things which monks do which appear to be both low and shameful.¹¹ Suppose that he also goes barefoot and sleeps on the ground, and that this beautiful young man becomes thin and pale. Imagine that he who lived in such luxury and honor, who had such hopes, has put on a garment more vile than that of any of his slaves.

Have we now given our opponent sufficient grounds for accusation, have we adequately outfitted our antagonist? If this is not enough, we shall provide other arguments. After this, imagine the father devising countless ways to persuade his son to change, and all in vain,

⁹ The following three paragraphs employ the rhetorical device ἡθρονία, a character sketch.

¹⁰ On the significance of the formula, "to surpass one's father," in Greek literature and especially in Libanius, see B. Schouler, "Dépasser le père," *Revue des études grecques* 93 (1980) 1-24, especially 19-24. The expression reflects Hellenic ideals of virtue (ἀρετή) and nobility (εὐγένεια).

¹¹ In his treatise *De compunctione ad Demetrium* 1.6 (PG 47.403), Chrysostom revealed the difficulties which he as an urban Christian faced upon entry into the monastic life. See above p. 15. For the complaints of upper-class Christians that the monastic life was shameful and unworthy of the well-born, see Chrysostom's remark to the monk Stagirus: "Your father said that the thing made you shameful and unworthy of the brilliance of your ancestors, and that you were destroying his own glory as well," and that if the bonds of nature were not so compelling, he would quickly disinherit you" (*Ad Stagirium a dāmonē texatū* 2.3 [PG 47.452]). Cf. the treatise *Ad Theodorum* 18 (SC 117.194-96).

while the child sits upon a rock and remains above the flood and rain and winds. See the father mourning and pouring forth tears, so that he stirs up greater wrath toward us. Then in the presence of everyone he meets, imagine him accusing us continually in these words:¹² "I bore him, I raised him. I worked hard all my life doing and suffering everything which tends to result from the begetting of children. I had fine hopes, I spoke with pedagogues, I called upon teachers, I spent money, I frequently stayed awake worrying about his good behavior, about his education, so that he would be inferior to none of his ancestors, so that he would appear more illustrious than all. I expected that he would be a comfort in my old age. I was thinking about a wife after a little while, and marriage, about a magistracy and political office."

"But suddenly, like a thunder-bolt, like a storm falling down from somewhere in the sky upon a trading ship loaded down with merchandise, which has just finished its journey over the great sea and sailed with a favorable wind and is, moreover, just about to enter the harbor, when the storm overwhelms the ship just outside the entrance, and it is feared that the storm will bring upon the head of such a wealthy man not only extreme poverty, but also a miserable death and destruction—this is what has happened to me now!¹³ These accursed corrupters and seducers (let him say these things, we will not differ) have carried off from such hopes the support of my old age and dragged him away to their dens like a band of robbers. They have so bewitched him with their songs that he prefers to stand nobly against the sword, fire, beasts, and everything rather than return to his former wealth.¹⁴

"And, what is worse, after persuading him to do this, they pretend to know better than we do what is in his interest. Houses are empty, fields are empty.¹⁵ Farmers and household slaves are filled with grief and disgrace. My enemies delight in my misfortunes, my friends hide

¹² The lengthy speech which follows is an example of the rhetorical device *apocomonotia*, the placing of a speech in the mouth of an imaginary character.

¹³ Metaphors taken from the sea and from navigation are among the most popular rhetorical devices employed by the sophists. Cf. T. E. Ameringer, *The Stylistic Influence of the Second Sophistic on the Panegyric Sermons of St. John Chrysostom*. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1920) 59: "Chrysostom in his liberal use of these terms rivals the most thoroughgoing of the rhetors."

¹⁴ On the attraction of monastic singing, see Chrysostom, Homily 14.4 on 1 Timothy (PG 62:576). Cf. Libanius, or. 30.8, for a negative view.

¹⁵ Libanius also blames the monks for the desertion of farms. See or. 2.32 and or. 30.48.

in shame. I have no thought now but to set on fire and to burn everything, houses, fields, herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. For what good are these things to me now, when the one who was to make use of them is not here, but has been taken captive and enslaved by wild barbarians in a slavery more bitter than any death? I have clothed my household in black garments, sprinkled their heads with ashes, set up a chorus of women, and ordered them to strike themselves more severely than if they had found him dead. Please excuse me for doing this. My grief is greater than if he were dead. Now the light of day greatly troubles me, and its rays are unpleasant to bear, whenever I conjure in my mind the image of that miserable child, whenever I see him clothed more dishonorably than the vilest of those farmers and sent out to more dishonorable works. Whenever I imagine his unbending resolve, I burn, I am torn apart, I burst!"

3. After saying these things, the father rolls forward before the feet of his audience, and scatters ashes upon his head; he disfigures his face with dust, entreats everyone to stretch out their hands, and covers his grey hair with dirt. We have probably portrayed our opponent well enough to inflame all his listeners and to persuade them to cast off a cliff those who have caused these things. In my speech I have tried to express the highest possible charges, so that nothing will be left to say when we have defeated this opponent by the grace of God. For when we have silenced the person who has all these grounds for complaint, the one who does not have them (and it is impossible for all of these conditions to converge) will easily concede the victory to us. Therefore, let him say all this and more. But I will beg the judges not to have pity on this old man now, but only when we shall show him grieving, while his son suffers no evil, but enjoys great goods, than which nothing greater can be found. For then he would be truly worthy of pity and tears, if he were unable to see the happiness of his child, but rather mourned while his child enjoyed the greatest goods.

How then shall we begin our speech to him? Let us begin with wealth and money, since this is what the parent mourns the most, and since the most fearsome thing of all seems to be that wealthy children are drawn to this way of life. Tell me now, whom does everyone call blessed and whom do we say is enviable: the person who is always thirsting and who, even before he has taken his fill of the first cup, is in need of another again, and who is constantly in this state, or the person who stands above this compulsion, and who remains ever thirstless and who is never compelled by the need of this drink? Is not the former like someone consumed by a fever, who is burdened by a

most terrible compulsion, even if he should be able to drink rivers to their source? And does not the latter enjoy true freedom, and true health, and a superhuman nature?²¹⁶

If someone who lusts for a woman should have intercourse with her continually and after this liaison should burn even more, but if another should stand beyond this madness and should not be seized by this evil, not even in a dream, who, once again, is enviable and blessed? Is it not the latter? Who is wretched and miserable? Is it not the one who suffers the sickness of this vain passion, who can never be extinguished, but who is afflicted all the more by the remedies that his mind conjures up? But if, in addition to what we have said, the person who is sick considers himself blessed, and does not wish to be freed from this compulsion, and if he weeps over those who have been freed from passion, as this father is doing now, will he not be more pitiable and more wretched? Such a person not only is sick, but also does not know that he is sick and for this reason does not wish to be freed and laments over those who have been freed.

Let us now speak about the possession of money, and we will see who is miserable and wretched, for [love of money] is more violent and more maddening than [carnal] passion. It can cause more suffering, not only because its flame burns more intensely, but also because it resists every conceivable remedy and is more unyielding than these [carnal passions]. For those who lust after drink or physical pleasure enjoy greater satisfaction after the act than those who are mad about money. That is why we had to illustrate these [carnal passions] in our speech, because they are not immediately apparent upon experience. But we can provide many examples of this sickness [of love of money] from reality itself.

Why, tell me, do you mourn for your son? Because he has been freed from such madness and turmoil, because he does not lust with an insatiable lust, because he stands above this struggle and battle? "But he would not have suffered this," you say, "nor would he have lusted for more, but he would have been satisfied to enjoy what he had. Above all," you say, "the thing is contrary to nature, so to speak."

²¹⁶ Here and throughout book two, Chrysostom relies heavily on stock portraits of the philosopher derived from Stoic and Cynic ethics. The "freedom" (λευτερία) and "self-sufficiency" (αὐτάρκεια) of the philosopher/monk is contrasted with the "compulsion" (δυνάμην) and slavery which passion and desire entail. A thorough discussion of Chrysostom's use of such τόποι can be found in A. U'eyn, "La doctrine morale de saint Jean Chrysostome," 5-25, 99-140.

So be it! We will grant that he would wish to add nothing to his present goods and that he would not be enslaved by this desire. Nonetheless, I will prove that he now enjoys greater comfort and pleasure. For what is easier: to be anxious about such things, and to be imprisoned by the slavery of guarding them, and to be afraid that any of one's goods might perish, or to be freed of these bonds? Granted that he has no desire for another's possessions; still it would be much better if he despised what is already placed before him. If not to be in need of more is admitted to be the greatest good, would there not be even greater happiness if he were also beyond the need of what is present? For the person who neither thirsts nor lusts (for nothing prevents us from going back to these examples) is demonstrably much happier, not only than those who always thirst and always lust, but also than those who suffer this [passion] for a short time and fulfill their desire, since he has not fallen into such a compulsion.

I will ask you another question: if it were possible to surpass all people in wealth and to be free of the evils which come from wealth, would you not choose this abundance a thousand times, so as not to suffer jealousy, slander, cares, or any other such things? If, then, we prove that your son possesses this and is now much wealthier, will you finally stop mourning and grieving so bitterly?

4. That he is free from care and from the other evils which wealth drags with it, you yourself will not deny; therefore, there is no need for us to speak with you on these matters. But you want to know how he is wealthier than you who possess such things. We will teach you this and we will prove that you yourself, who think that your son is now in extreme poverty, are the one who really is suffering poverty in comparison to him. And do not think that we are speaking about the goods that are in heaven and about things in the next life, for we shall make our demonstration from what is here at hand.

You are lord only over those things that are yours, but he is master over goods throughout the whole world. But if you do not believe me, let us go to him, and persuade him to come down from the mountains; or rather, even while remaining there, let him give a sign to someone who is very wealthy and pious to send him any amount of gold you wish. Or better, since your son will not allow this, have him order [the rich person] to give to someone in need, and you will see the wealthy man obeying and carrying out the order with greater zeal than any of your stewards. When the steward is ordered to spend money, he is downcast and sullen, whereas such a rich man, whenever he does not

spend, is afraid that he has given offense since he has received no such order.¹⁷

And I could show you many persons, not only those who are famous, but also those who are less prominent, who have such power. And if your stewards squander what has been entrusted to them, you would not have anyone to turn to, but immediately your wealth would be transformed into poverty by their evil doing. But your son has no such fear. For if he should become poor, he simply will ask someone else. And if this [benefactor] should suffer a similar fate, he will go to someone else; and the sources of rivers would probably run dry before those who will follow his orders in these matters.

And if you shared our convictions, we would tell you many great stories that are similar, both old and new. But since you prefer what belongs to the pagans, I also find a paradigm there.¹⁸ Listen to what Crito says to Socrates:¹⁹

I think that you've got enough of my money for yourself already. And then even supposing that in your anxiety for my safety you feel that you oughtn't to spend my money, there are these foreign gentlemen staying in Athens who are quite willing to spend theirs. One of them, Simmias of Thebes, has actually brought the money with him for this very purpose, and Cebes and a number of others are quite ready to do the same. So, as I say, you mustn't let any fears on these grounds make you slacken your efforts to escape, and you mustn't feel any misgivings about what you said at your trial—that you wouldn't know what to do with yourself if you left this country. Wherever you go, there are plenty of places where you will find a welcome, and if you choose to go

¹⁷ On the influence of monks with wealthy Antiochenes, see Theodoret, *Religious History* 2.20, 3.22, 9.4, and 13.3.

¹⁸ The use of noble philosophers as examples (ἡγαθέων) was specially popular in the ancient rhetorical diatribe. See Marrou, "Diatribe," *Realexikon für Antike und Christentum* 3 (1957) 998 and M. Aubineau, "Introduction," *Gregoire de Nysse. Traité de la virginité*. Sources Chrétiennes, 119 (Paris, 1966) 84. On the figure of Socrates specifically, see A. M. Malingrey, "Le personnage de Socrate chez quelques auteurs chrétiens du IV^e siècle," in *Forma futur. Studi in onore di M. Pellegrino* (Turin, 1975) 159–78.

¹⁹ Plato, *Crito* 45 bc. Translation by H. Tredennick in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, Edited by E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, (Princeton, 1961) 30. [Original source: Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates*, translated by Hugh Tredennick, (Penguin Classics, 1954, 1959), c. Hugh Tredennick, 1954, 1959. Reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.] The length and accuracy of the quotation indicate that Chrysostom is not citing from memory. See Fabricius, *Zu den Jugendschriften* 134 and P. T. Baldui, "Di due citazioni di Platone in Giovanni Crisostomo," *Rivista di Filologia e Istruzione Classica* 28 (1900) 69–75.

to Thessaly, I have friends there who will make much of you and give you complete protection, so that no one in Thessaly can interfere with you.

What could be more pleasant than this abundance? But these things have to do with a worldly man. If we wished to examine a wealth which is more philosophical than this, perhaps you would not follow the speech. Nonetheless we must speak on account of the judges.

Such is the wealth of virtue, so much more pleasurable, so much more desirable than yours, that those who have it would never exchange it for the whole world, even if the world with its mountains, seas, and rivers should be turned into gold. If this could happen, you would know from direct experience that we are not merely boasting, and that those who have found what is much greater and better despise material wealth and would never exchange the one for the other. And what do I mean by saying that they would not exchange one for the other? They would not wish even to possess the two together. Indeed, if someone should give you the wealth of virtue along with money, you would receive it with open hands. Thus you admit that this [wealth of virtue] is something great and wonderful. But these [monks] do not even wish to possess your kind of wealth along with their own, so well do they know that the thing is to be despised. Once again, I will make this clear from your own paradigms. How much money do you think Alexander would have given to Diogenes, if Diogenes had wished to accept it? But he did not wish to. But Alexander tried hard and did everything so as to be able to approach the wealth of Diogenes.²⁰

5. Do you wish to see your own poverty and the wealth of your child from another angle? Go and take away his cloak, which is the only one he has, drive him out of his cell, and destroy his hut, and even so you will see him not at all annoyed or vexed; rather, he will thank you for this, since you have impelled him further toward philosophy. But if someone should take from you only ten drachmas, you never stop

²⁰ Chrysostom refers to the well-known meeting between Diogenes the Cynic and Alexander the Great. The story occurs in several versions in Plutarch's *Alexander* 671, and in Diogenes Laertius, *De clarorum philosophorum vitis* 6.32, 38, and 68. Chrysostom tells a slightly different version of the story below in book two, section 5. See P. R. Coleman Norton, "St. John Chrysostom and the Greek Philosophers," *Classical Philology* 25 (1930) 308–9 for further references to Diogenes in Chrysostom's works.

mourning and weeping. Who, then, is the wealthy one—the one who cries over small things, or the one who despises all things?"

And do not stop at this, but also drive him out of the entire region, and you will see him laughing at this as if it were child's play. But if someone simply drove you from your native city, you would believe that this was the most terrible thing and would not bear the calamity. But that son of yours, since all the earth and sea are his, would migrate from one place to another as contentedly and painlessly as you stroll through your own fields—indeed, even more contentedly than you do. For even if it is possible for you to walk through your own fields, you still must walk through fields that belong to other people. But he travels through an entire world that is his own, and everywhere pools and rivers and streams provide him drink in abundance; his food is garden vegetables, herbs, and breads from many places.²¹

I do not yet say to you that he also despises the whole earth since he has a city in heaven. Even if he should have to die, he would bear death with greater pleasure than he would your luxury, and he will pray to die in that state more than you in your homeland and on your bed. Thus one could say that the true wanderer and exile and vagabond is the person who lives in a city and dwells in a house, and not the one who is free of all these things. For you could not drive him out of his homeland, unless you drove him from the entire earth. (At least this is how I will speak now; for, if I were to speak the truth, you send him to his homeland most of all when you drive him from the earth. But I cannot yet say this to you who know nothing more than what the eye sees.)

You could not show him to be naked, as long as he is clothed in the garments of virtue; nor will you kill him by starvation, as long as he knows what is true nourishment, whereas the wealthy are conquered by all these things. And so, it would not be wrong to call the rich poor and those who are very poor extremely wealthy.²² For the person who always can have plenty of food and drink and housing and relaxation and who not only is not unhappy, but who lives more pleasantly in

²¹ The image of the philosopher as a homeless exile was common among the Cynics and associated especially with the figure of Diogenes. See Dio Chrysostom, or. 8.15-16 and or. 4.12-13; also Julian, or. 7.211d, "To the Cynic Heraclitos," and the *Letter to Themistios*, 256d, where Julian cites a maxim of Diogenes describing the "ideal man" as the person "without a city, without a home, bereft of a fatherland."

²² Such paradoxes were common in the moral preaching of the Cynics and Stoics: Uleyn, "La doctrine morale de saint Jean Chrysostome," 20-23.

these conditions than you do in yours, clearly this person is wealthier than all you rich people who can find these things only at home.

That is why your son will never have to grieve about poverty. His wealth is superior to yours not only in its abundance and pleasure, but also because it will never fail and be turned into poverty. It is not subject to the uncertainty of the future, it does not breed anxiety or jealousy; rather, it produces admiration, praise and good repute. But the very opposite is the case for you. Not only do people not praise you for your wealth, but they hate you and turn away from you and envy you and plot against you. But when a person is wealthy with true wealth, he is especially admired for this and not envied or plotted against.

Now, then, in regard to health, who is better off? Is not your son vigorous and healthy in body like the wild animals,²³ since he enjoys the pure air and healthy streams and flowers and groves and pure, sweet smells, whereas the [wealthy] person, as if he were lying in a cesspool, is rather soft and sickly? And if your son has first place in health, clearly he enjoys superior pleasure as well. For who do you think lives in greater luxury, the one who lies on the high grass, beside a clear stream, under the shade of enormous trees, and who feasts his eyes on the sight and keeps his soul purer than the heavens and far from commotion and disturbance, or the person who is shut up in his house?²⁴ For marble stones are not purer than the air, nor is the shade of a roof more pleasant than the shade of trees, nor is a mosaic pavement more beautiful than a patch of multi-colored flowers.²⁵ You rich people yourselves testify to this: if it were possible to have trees and the comfort of meadows in the upper rooms of your houses, you would choose these rather than golden roofs and magnificent walls. For whenever you desire to take a vacation from your many labors, you leave the latter behind and hasten to the former.

But perhaps you are mourning about glory, that great and splendid glory which seems to be missing from the monastic life. You compare regal trappings with solitude, and the hopes in the one way of life with

²³ Fabricius, *Zu den Jugendschriften* 127, sees in the words "vigorous and healthy in body" (εὐδωγαὶ καὶ ὀφρύνει) an echo of Aristophanes, *Clouds* 799. On Chrysostom's reading of Aristophanes, see Q. Cataudella, "Giovanni Crisostomo, 'imitatore' di Aristofane," *Athenaeum* 18 (1940) 236-43.

²⁴ Fabricius, *Zu den Jugendschriften* 127, sees in the foregoing lines an imitation of Plato, *Phaedrus* 230b. There are several verbal reminiscences.

²⁵ For pictures and discussion of the elaborate mosaic floors of Antioch, see D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1947).

those in the other, and you think that your son has fallen from heaven itself. Therefore, first of all, you must know that solitude does not make a person dishonorable, nor does kingship make him famous and illustrious. But before we come to reasoned argument, I will remove your suspicion by means of examples, examples taken not from among us, but from your own side.

Perhaps you have heard of Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily,²⁶ and of Plato, son of Ariston. Who, tell me, has become the more illustrious? Who is praised and spoken of by all? Is it not the philosopher rather than the tyrant? And yet the tyrant ruled the entire world, lived in luxury, and spent his days amid great wealth, bodyguards, and other vanity, but Plato spent his time in the garden of the Academy, watering, sowing, eating olives, laying out a cheap table, and being free of all this vanity. And this is not yet the marvelous fact, but rather that after becoming a slave and being sold by order of the tyrant, Plato, far from appearing less honorable than the tyrant because of this, actually seemed admirable even to the tyrant himself.²⁷ Such is virtue! Not only through its actions, but also through the misfortunes it suffers, it prevents itself and those who practice it from being forgotten or consigned to oblivion.

And what of Plato's teacher, Socrates? How much more illustrious was he than Archelaus?²⁸ And yet Archelaus was a king who lived in great wealth, whereas Socrates lived in Lyceum and had only one garment and in this alone he was clothed winter and summer, and throughout the year.²⁹ He lived with his feet always bare and spent the entire day without food, eating only bread, and this was both his

²⁶ Dionysius I (c. 430-367 BCE).

²⁷ Chrysostom refers to the story widespread in antiquity (but not mentioned by Plato himself) that Plato had met Dionysius on his first visit to Sicily and that he had infuriated the tyrant by his outspoken condemnation of tyranny. In revenge, Dionysius handed Plato over to be sold by a Spartan envoy. See Diogenes Laertius, *De clarorum philosophorum vitis* 3.18-19. The historicity of the incident is questionable. See G.C. Field, *Plato and his Contemporaries: A Study in Fourth-Century Life and Thought*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1967) 17-18. Chrysostom refers to this story on several other occasions: homily 33.4 on Matthew (PG 57.392), homily 2.5 on Romans (PG 60.407), homily 4.4 on 1 Corinthians (PG 61.36). See P.R. Coleman-Norton, "St. John Chrysostom and the Greek Philosophers," 310.

²⁸ Archelaus was king of Macedon from 413-399 BCE.

²⁹ See the similar description of the monk in the *Comparatio* 3 and the parallel passage in Libanius, *Apologia Socratis*, decl. 1.18.

meat and meal. And he did not provide that meal out of his own resources, but he received it from others, so extreme was the poverty in which he lived.³⁰ Yet he was more illustrious than the king, so much so that, when the king frequently summoned him to appear before him, Socrates did not want to leave Lyceum and approach the king's wealth.³¹ The way that each one lived is revealed by the glory which they now possess. For the names of those men, Plato and Socrates, are known to many, whereas Dionysius and Archelaus are virtually unknown.

And that man from Sinope, again another philosopher, was so much wealthier than these and a thousand other such kings, even though he lived in rags, that when Alexander was leading the army of Philip of Macedon into Persia, upon seeing Diogenes, Alexander left everything, approached Diogenes and asked him if he needed or wanted anything. But Diogenes did not reply.³² Do you have enough examples now, or do you want us to recall still others? For these [philosophers] became more illustrious, not only than those who associated with kings, but also more than the king himself, although they chose the private life free of business and did not wish to get close to the government.

But even in the government you will see that those who become famous are not the ones who live in wealth, luxury, and abundance, but rather those who live a life of poverty, simplicity and modesty. Among the Athenians, Aristides,³³ whom the city honored with funeral rites upon his death, was so much more illustrious than Alcibiades who was outstanding in wealth, family, luxury, rhetorical

³⁰ The poverty of Socrates was a commonplace among writers of the diatribe such as Dio Chrysostom and Maximus of Tyre. It also appears several times in Libanius. See H. Markowski, *De Libanio Socratis defensor*. Breslau: Philologische Abhandlungen, 40 (Breslau: Marcus, 1910; reprinted New York/Hildesheim: G. Olms Verlag, 1970) 67-68.

³¹ The call of Socrates by Archelaus was a well-known story, occurring in Aristotle, Seneca, Diogenes Laertius, Dio Chrysostom, Libanius and others. See Markowski, *De Libanio Socratis defensor* 107-8.

³² See above, 2.4, p. 107.

³³ Aristides, Athenian statesman and soldier (fl. 490-467 BCE), became known in the tradition for his honesty and frugality. He was nicknamed "the just" (δίκαιος). See the entry in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertums-Wissenschaft* 2 (1895) 883. Plutarch, *Aristides* 27.1, records that Aristides' tomb is located at Phalerum and that "they say the city constructed it for him, since he did not leave even enough to pay for his funeral." Plato also attests to his character. *Menon* 94a and *Gorgias* 526ab.

power, bodily strength, nobility of birth and everything else, as much as a marvelous philosopher is more illustrious than some worthless child.³⁴ Among the Thebans, Epaminondas, a person who was called to the assembly but was unable to go because he had to wash his clothes and had nothing else to wear, nonetheless was more distinguished than all the generals who were there.³⁵ So do not speak to me of solitude or kingship. Fame and splendor do not reside in places or in clothes or in dignity or in power, but only in virtue of soul and philosophy.

6. But since the examples are not so persuasive, I will make my examination from your son himself. For we will find not only that he is now more illustrious, but also that he is more illustrious precisely because of the things which you say make him dishonorable and worthless. For, if you wish, we will persuade him to come down from the mountains and go into the marketplace, and you will see the entire city turning around and everyone pointing at him in wonder and amazement, as if some angel from heaven were now at their side. Do you think that glory is anything else but this? Because of those worn and worthless clothes, he will be more noble, not only than those in the king's service, but also than the king himself who wears the crown.

If he were dressed in gold, or even in purple with the king's crown upon his head, lying upon silken beds, being drawn by mules, and having bodyguards dressed in gold, he would not amaze everyone as much as he does now by being dirty and unwashed, wearing a rough garment, bringing no followers with him and being barefoot. The former are the rule for a king and are a matter of custom; therefore, if someone should say with admiration that the king is wearing a golden

³⁴ Alcibiades (c. 450-404 BCE), son of Cleinias, was an Athenian general and statesman. His physical beauty and moral decadence are amply attested in Plato's *Symposium* and in Plutarch's *Alcibiades*. See also the remark of Cornelius Nepos, *Liberalis de excellentibus duobus externarum gentium* 7.1.1: "In this man Nature seems to have tried to see what she could accomplish; for it is agreed by all who have written his biography that he was never excelled either in faults or in virtues." Translation by J.C. Rolfe, *Cornelius Nepos*. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929) 435.

³⁵ Epaminondas (d. 362 BCE), a Theban statesman and soldier, was famed for his frugality and the rectitude of his public life. Plutarch wrote parallel lives of Scipio and Epaminondas which are now lost. In his oration 4.71 against Julian, Gregory Nazianzen refers to the monks as contemporary "Epaminondas and Scipios" (SC 309.182; ed. J. Bernardi).

stole, not only would we not marvel, but we would even laugh at what he said, since this is what we expect of a king.

But if someone should come and announce that your son has derided his father's wealth and trampled underfoot worldly vanity and risen above earthly hopes, that he has taken himself to solitude and put on a cheap, wornout frock, immediately everyone would run together in admiration, applauding him for his greatness of soul.³⁶ And, since kings are constantly being denounced, golden clothes do not benefit them at all, so impossible it is for clothes to make them admirable. But your son's clothes gain for him great admiration. A robe like his attracts more attention and notice than the robe of a king; even if no one admired the king for his robe, everyone would marvel at your son for wearing his.

"But," you will say, "what use to me is the opinion of the crowd and their praises?" And yet, what else is glory but these things? "But," you will say, "I have no need of this; political power is what I want, and honor." Certainly those who praise also give honor. But if you wish for political power and position, we will find that the monks possess this no less than the preceding goods. We could also make this apparent from examples, but to argue in a way which is most likely to persuade you, we will examine the case not in respect to other people, but in regard to your son.

What do you say is a sign of the greatest power? Is it not to be able to take revenge on all who harm you, to be able to repay those who do good to you? But anyone can see that not even the king has this total power, for many do him harm whom he cannot harm, and many serve him well whom he cannot easily reward. Frequently in battle he would like to avenge himself against enemies who harm him and cause him countless evils, but he is powerless. And as for his friends who displayed great accomplishments there, he is unable to reward

³⁶ "Greatness of soul" (*μεγαλοψυχία*) is a classical virtue with both public and private dimensions. According to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.3.1123b, "that man is thought to be 'great souled' who thinks himself worthy of great things and who is truly worthy of them." Associated with both beneficence (*εὐεργεσία*) and courage (*ἀνδρεία*), *μεγαλοψυχία* could also refer to the public acts of generosity on the part of a civic official or patron. For the latter sense in Chrysostom's day, see the famous depiction of this virtue personified in the fifth century mosaic of the Yakto complex at Antioch: D. Levi, *Antioch Mosaic Pavements*, v. 1, 337-45. Libanius often used the word to designate the spirit of one who had renounced wealth and material comforts in exchange for the glory of the orator. See B. Schouler, *La tradition hellénique chez Libanos* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984) 979-82.

them suitably because they already have fallen in battle and been snatched away before the rewards are offered.

What, then, if we prove that your son has another power much greater than that power which, as our discourse already has shown, not even the kings enjoy? And let no one suspect that perhaps we are talking about heavenly goods, in which you do not believe. We have not forgotten our promises. But we shall prove our case from what happens in this life. For if the greatest power is to be able to take revenge on those who harm you, it is even greater still to achieve a state of life in which no one can harm you, even if they wish to. The superiority of the latter to the former will be clear and apparent to us if we continue our speech with another example.

Tell me, which is better, to be so skilled in warfare that no one who wounds us can escape unwounded, or to possess such a body that no one can harm it, even if he should attack a thousand times? It certainly is clear to everyone that the second form of power is the greater and more godlike. And this is not all, but there is even something far superior to this. What is it? To know the remedies by means of which all wounds are done away with. Therefore, there are three modes of power: the first, to be able to take revenge on wrongdoers; the second, superior to the first, the ability to heal one's own wounds (for the second does not always go with the first). But the third is not to be subject to the power of any human being. We will prove that your son possesses this third form of power which is beyond human nature.

7. To prove that these words are not empty chatter, in our search we have found something even better than this great power. For not only will you not find anyone able to harm him, but not even anyone who wishes to, and so he is safe on both counts. What could be more divine than this life in which no one wishes to do harm, nor, if they wish, are they able to do harm? Moreover, the lack of desire to harm comes not from the inability (as is usually the case), but from the lack of any reason to do harm. If it were simply the case that they were unable to do harm, it would not be such a great thing, for great hatred is engendered in those who wish to do harm, but who are unable (although even this is no small kind of happiness). So then, we will examine this point in particular, if you will. Tell me, then, who would ever wish to harm a person who has nothing in common with other people, neither contracts, nor land, nor money, nor business, nor anything else? For what territory would someone dispute with him? What slaves? What glory? What fears would there be? What causes for annoyance? For we are moved to harm others either out of

jealousy, fear or anger. But this most regal man is above all things. Who would envy him who laughs at all the things which cause others to mourn and feel anxious? Who would grow angry with him who does no wrong? Who would fear him who has no suspicions? Therefore, it is clear that no one wishes to harm him.

Likewise, it also is clear that no one could harm him, even if he wished. For he provides neither opportunities nor occasions for someone to restrain him; rather, he is like the eagle which flies too high to be caught in the snares for the sparrows. How could anyone harm him? He has no money in order to be threatened with a fine. He has no homeland in order to be sent into exile. He longs not for glory in order to be led into dishonor. One thing is left—death. But in this, most of all, you can never harm him; rather, you would do him the greatest favor. For you would send him to the other life, which he desires greatly and which is the reason he does all that he does. And so, this would be deliverance from toil and not dishonor; it would be freedom from labor and rest.

Do you wish to know yet another way in which he is powerful, one much more philosophical than this? For even if someone should do countless, terrible things to him, beat him, and throw him into chains, his body would be injured because of nature, but his soul would remain uninjured because of his philosophy. He is not overcome with anger, nor constrained by hatred, nor conquered by enmity. And this is not the greatest feat, but there is something much more marvelous than this. For he loves those who do such things to him as if they were benefactors and patrons, and he prays for all goods to come to them. What comparable gift could you give him, even if you made him king of the world a thousand times over and extended his reign for a thousand years? Does he not possess something more honorable than any purple, any office, or any glory? What would you not sacrifice to possess such a soul? It seems to me that even those who are great lovers of their bodies would prefer this way of life.

Do you wish to see from yet another angle the more marvelous and most agreeable power of the man, from a point of view which is less exalted, but agreeable to you? What we have said thus far has proven that he is unconquered and invincible. But perhaps you are anxious to learn that he also exercises patronage for others and can guarantee

their security.³⁷ The highest form of this patronage is to inspire in others the same zeal and thus to make them strong. But even if the others do not wish it and pursue instead this rather human and earthly way of life, even then you will see that he who has nothing is more powerful than you wealthy folk, precisely because he has nothing.

For who will address the king and censure him with greater power? You who have such great possessions and because of them are dependent even upon his slaves, you who tremble about everything, who provide countless occasions for him if he becomes angry and wishes to harm you, or the one who is out of the reach of his hands? For those who are free of all worldly things will address kings with exceedingly great power.³⁸ To whom would a person in power and engaged in imperial affairs more likely yield and obey, you who are wealthy and who, he suspects, frequently acts for the sake of money, or the person who has only one reason to give orders, namely philanthropy toward others? Whom will he honor and admire? The one about whom he could suspect nothing low, or the one who he thinks is baser than his own slaves? For just as when it is necessary to spend money, they prefer to obey those [holy] men, so also they urge them to be patrons.

8. But, if you wish, suppose that he accomplishes nothing through the medium of others, but only by himself. And let us bring someone who is suffering badly both to him and to you: or better, not to you, but to the emperor himself. Then we will see who is better able to care for the sufferer. First, let someone be brought who has suffered the most terrible calamity. Suppose that this person had only one son whom he has lost in the prime of his life. No ruler or king or anyone else could help him, especially not you. For you will give him nothing comparable to what he has lost. But if you bring him to your son, he will

³⁷ On the patronage (προποσια) exercised by Syrian monks, see Theodoret, *Religious History* 17.3, where the monk Abraham is invited to become the village patron after his intervention with tax-collectors. Later Abraham negotiated a loan for the village. On patronage in general, see Libanius, or. 47 *De patrocinis*, and Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man," *passim*.

³⁸ The "power" (ἐξουσία) of the holy man to address rulers was legendary. See Theodoret, *Religious History* 8.8, where the monk Aphraat rebukes the emperor Valens and a similar incident recorded about the monk Isaac of Constantinople in Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.34. After the riot of the statues at Antioch in 387, the intervention of the Syrian monks, especially Macdonius, was hailed by Chrysostom as a sign of the superiority of Christianity over Hellenism. See or. 17.1-2 *De status* (PG 49.172-175) and Theodoret, *Religious History* 13.7.

immediately uplift him, first of all by the sight, by the dress, by the dwelling, and he will persuade him to think nothing of human affairs. Then by his words he will easily dispel the cloud.³⁹

But your house would cause him even greater grief. For when he sees that house of yours free of misfortunes, full of much happiness, and having an heir, he will burn all the more. But with your son he will be calmer, more philosophical. For when he sees your son showing contempt for such a great fortune, for such glory and splendor, he will not grieve so much about his dead son. For how will he be vexed by the loss of an heir to his goods, when he sees that someone else has despised all these things? And he will listen more readily when the person who speaks about philosophy proves his words true by his actions. But if you merely opened your mouth, you would cause him great anguish since you would be philosophizing about misfortunes that are not your own.

But your son, who teaches by his actions, will easily persuade him that death is nothing more than sleep. For he will not enumerate a host of parents who have suffered the same misfortune; rather, he will show that he himself each day undergoes death in his body and is ever prepared for it.⁴⁰ After rendering the doctrine of the resurrection more credible, he will send the man away freed from much of his grief, for his words supported by his actions will be much more effective at consolation than banquets and funeral meals.⁴¹ And in this way, perhaps, the mourner will be healed.

Bring another to him, if you wish, someone who has lost his eyes after a lengthy illness. What will you be able to offer him? But your son, who is enclosed in a tiny dwelling, who is hastening towards another light, and who thinks that the present light is nothing compared to the future light, will prove that this illness is nothing terrible and will teach him to bear his misfortune with nobility. But will you be able to persuade those who are suffering calamity to

³⁹ The ability to offer consolation (ἐπαρηγορία) to those in mourning was considered to be one of the hallmarks of the true philosopher. See R. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy: Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories*, Patristic Monograph Series, 2 (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975) 4-6, and the literature cited there.

⁴⁰ The theme of "dying daily" was popular in monastic literature. See, for example, Athanasius, *Life of Antony* 19, 89, 91.

⁴¹ Chrysostom often claims that the Christian fearlessness of death, shaped as it is by belief in the resurrection, distinguishes pagan from Christian. See F. Leduc, "L'eschatologie, une préoccupation centrale de saint Jean Chrysostome," *Proche-orient chrétien* 29 (1969) 109-37, especially 121-22.

philosophize? Certainly not, but you will cause them even greater grief. For we usually perceive our own misfortunes more clearly when we see our neighbors prospering. But your son will more easily restore these people. I do not mention the help that comes from prayer which is far better than anything else. I omit this since my speech is now directed to you.

But if you wish to be honored on account of your son and not to be despised (and it is likely that you desire this), I know no better way to achieve this than to have a child who surpasses human nature, whose glory shines throughout the earth, and who, despite such splendor, has no enemy. For if he were endowed with the power you desire, he would be honored by many, but he also would be hated by many. But, as he is, all who honor him take pleasure in doing so. For if humble people of humble origin, the sons of farmers and craftsmen, by embarking on this philosophy become so honored by all that no one in the highest ranks is embarrassed to go to their little hut and to share their conversation and table, but if they enjoy such fine treatment, as if they possessed the greatest goods (which, indeed, they do), how much more will they do this when they see someone from a splendid family, endowed with splendid possessions, who has such great hopes, approaching this virtue!⁴²

Thus the very thing which you regret, namely that he has gone from his former state to the present one, is that which more than anything else makes him illustrious. Moreover, this is what convinces everyone to regard him not as a man, but as an angel. For they will not have the same suspicions about your son which they have about the others, namely that he has chosen this path out of a desire for honor, a longing for money and a wish to become famous from a humble origin. Even if these false and evil words are said about the others, there could never be room for such suspicion in the case of your son.

9. And do not think that this happens only while the emperors live in piety. Even if the empire should undergo a change and the rulers should become pagans, the situation of your son would become all the more brilliant. For our status is not like that of the Greeks; it does not depend on the opinions of rulers, but it stands upon its own strength

⁴² On the humble origins of monks as former craftsmen and farmers, see Libanius, or. 30.31 and or. 2.32. Visits to the monks by prominent citizens of Antioch were very common. See Theodoret, *Religious History* 3.9, 3.22, 6.6, 8.4, 13.3. Pagans frequently found this inordinate influence of the monks infuriating. See, for example, Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 472 and Julian, or. 7.224ab.

and is more apparent the more it is attacked.⁴³ When a general is illustrious in peacetime, he will be even more famous at the onset of war. Therefore, even when the pagans are in power, it will be similar with your son, and his honor will be greater. For those who praise your son now will do so all the more when they see him prepared for battle, exercising greater confidence, and having many occasions for illustrious behavior.

Would you like us now to examine his attitude towards you, or is this topic superfluous? For he who is so gentle and kind towards others that he offers no one any cause for complaint will hold his father in even greater honor and will care for him much more than if he possessed worldly power. When someone comes to high office, it is uncertain whether or not he will despise his father. But now he has chosen a way of life through which he becomes more regal than the king and the most humble person in the world towards you. Such is the wisdom which exists among us: two things which seem to be opposites, namely a sense of moderation and a loftiness, meet in one soul.

Once there was a time when, desiring your money, he would have been pleased to see you dead. But now he even prays that you live a long time, so that even in this he might receive splendid crowns. For we shall receive no small reward if we honor our parents, and we are commanded to consider them as our masters, caring for them in word and in deed, as long as no harm is done to piety. For what, as the saying goes, *can you give back to them which is anything like what they have given to you?*⁴⁴ Know, then, that the person who in all other respects has reached the pinnacle of virtue will no doubt expend every effort to fulfill this duty as well. Even if he should have to die to save your life, he would not refuse, since not only does he care for you and honor you because of the law of nature, but above all because of God for whose sake he has come to despise all other things.

⁴³ Cf. the similar sentiments expressed in Chrysostom's treatise *On St. Babylas. Against Julian and the Greeks*: "When a Christian ascends the imperial throne, far from being shored up by human honors, Christianity deteriorates. On the other hand, when rule is held by an impious man, who persecutes us in every way and subjects us to countless evils, then our cause acquires renown and becomes more brilliant..." Translation by M. Schatkin, *St. John Chrysostom, Apologist*. Fathers of the Church, 73 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1983) 99. As Schatkin notes, p. 99, n. 82, "Chrysostom thus questions the advantage of the Constantinian alliance between the church and the Roman empire; his attitude is 'un-Byzantine'."

⁴⁴ Sirach 7:28.

Therefore, since he is now more illustrious, wealthier, more powerful, freer, and since in his loftiness of spirit he is now more your servant than ever, why, tell me, do you mourn? Because you do not fear each day that he might fall in battle or offend the emperor or incur the envy of his fellow soldiers? Do not the fathers of illustrious children have to fear these very things, and even more? Just as the person who places his child upon a high place must tremble lest he fall, so, too, must those who lead their children to high office.

"But the soldier's belt and the military cloak and the sound of the herald offer a kind of pleasure," [you object]. But how long does this last, tell me: for thirty days, or a hundred, or two hundred? And what then? Do not all these things pass like a dream or a myth or a shadow?⁴⁵ But now his honor will last to his death, and even beyond death, and much longer than that, and no one shall ever take this power from him, since it has been entrusted to him not by any human being, but by virtue itself.

But you wished to see him wearing luxurious clothes, riding on a horse, surrounded by a crowd of servants and supporting a retinue of flatterers and fawners? Why did you want these things? Was it not for him to take pleasure in all these things? If you heard him saying (for perhaps you will not trust us) that he considers his own life so much more pleasurable than a life of luxury, fornication, music, parasites, flatterers and other stupidity, that he would choose to die a thousand deaths rather than exchange the one type of pleasure for the other, what would you say to that? Do you not know how much pleasure there is in a life free of business? Perhaps no one else knows this since no one has ever tasted [this life] in its purity. But when this splendor is present, and when these other goods are found together in their entirety, I mean security and glory, what better way of life could there be?

"But," you will say, "why do you speak to me about this when I am so far from philosophy?" Why, then, do you prevent your son from drawing close to it? It is enough that the damage is done to you. Do you not think it is the greatest tragedy that people reach old age and are disgusted with their lives because they have done nothing worthwhile in their youth? "But surely," you will reply, "old age is a

45 The words "dream" (*ôvnp*) and "shadow" (*okta*) echo a commonplace of Greek poetry: "Man is the dream of a shadow" (Pindar, *Pyth.* 8.99b). See M. Schackin, *St. John Chrysostom. Apologist* 95, n. 69 for this and further classical parallels. The phrase is found several times in Chrysostom's early works.

burden because youth brought us great advantages." What great advantages? Show me an old man who possesses these great advantages. If he possessed them, and if they lasted any length of time, he would not be mourning now as if he were deprived of all these things. But if they have flown away and faded, why call them great advantages when they disappear so quickly?

But your son will not suffer this. If he should live to a great old age, you will not see him complaining, as you yourself do; rather, he will be full of joy, delight and contentment, for then his goods are in full flower. But the delights which your wealth procures, many though they may be, are limited to the first part of your life. Not so with your son; his wealth endures into old age and accompanies him even after death. That is why you feel discontented in your old age; despite the increase of your wealth and the abundance of occasions for glory and luxury, your age does not allow you to enjoy these things. That is why you tremble in the face of death and declare yourself to be the most miserable person in the world at the very hour of prosperity.

But your son will enjoy peace especially when he grows old, since he hastens to enter the harbor, and remains ever young, and never grows old. But you wanted your son to live in luxury which would have caused him a thousand regrets and grief in old age. We should not wish such luxury even on our enemies! But why do I speak about old age? In the space of a day those pleasures vanish—no, they do not last even for a day or an hour, but for the briefest moment. For what is pleasure? Is it not to fill one's belly, to partake of Sybaritic meals and to have intercourse with ripe young women, rolling around just like pigs in the mud?⁴⁶

10. But let us not talk about this just yet. Let us first examine whether pleasure itself is not something insipid and cheap. If you will, let us deal first with what seems to be the most pleasurable, namely indulgence. Show me how long it lasts; show me how much of the day can be spent indulging. So little that it can barely be perceived. For as soon as a person has taken his fill, the pleasure is gone; even before satiety the pleasure passes more quickly than a flood; it disappears down his throat and does not last even as long as the food does. As soon as it passes his tongue, it already has lost its force. I will not mention the rest of the discomforts and turmoil which

46 The luxury of the inhabitants of Sybaris, a Greek colony on the gulf of Tarentum destroyed in 510 BCE, was proverbial in antiquity. Libanius refers to it several times. See Fabricius, *Zu den Jugendschriften* 135.

are produced by indulgence. Not only is the non-indulgent person more cheerful, but he is also lighter and will sleep more easily than the one who is distended by satiety. As the saying goes, *there is healthy sleep in a moderate stomach*.⁴⁷ Why speak of the sickness, the nausea, the misfortunes, the useless expenses? What of the complaints, the fines, the insults which arise from those banquets?

"But it is pleasurable to have intercourse with wicked women!" And what kind of pleasure would come from such a shameful action? We will not even speak of the quarrels between lovers, or the battles with rival lovers, or the damage to one's reputation. But let us suppose that there is someone who enjoys complete freedom in his debauchery; suppose that he has no rivals, that he is not neglected by his beloved, that he has an endless flow of money, although the concurrence of all these is an impossibility. (Indeed, the person who wishes to eliminate his rival must exhaust all his resources to surpass everyone else in munificence; on the other hand, the person who does not want to go bankrupt will be neglected and spit upon by his mistress.)

"But suppose nothing like this happens, and that everything goes according to his wishes." Can you still prove to us that he derives pleasure from this? For even in the act of intercourse there seems to be no pleasure, since the one who has consummated the union also has extinguished the pleasure; on the other hand, the one who is still in coitus does not experience pleasure, but rather tumult, confusion, frenzy, madness, great turmoil and violent shaking.

But the pleasure we enjoy is not like this. Far from it! It keeps the soul completely free of disturbance; it produces no tumult or confusion, but rather a kind of happiness, pure, chaste, honorable, endless, and much more powerful and robust than the pleasure which you have. Proof that our pleasure is superior to yours is that fear can take yours away. For if the emperor should send letters threatening death, most people will abstain from that pleasure; but in our case, even if someone could inflict a thousand deaths, he would not persuade us to despise this pleasure, but we would laugh all the more. This pleasure of ours is so much more imperious and more pleasurable than yours that there is no comparison between the two. Do not malign your child when he exchanges transient goods, or rather things which are not true goods, for those which are true and lasting goods. Do not mourn when he should be considered blessed, but do so

⁴⁷ Sirach 31:20.

only when someone not like him is caught in this earthly life as if in a turbulent strait.

Now to the chief point. For even if you are an unbeliever and a pagan, nonetheless you will listen to what we say. You certainly have heard of the rivers Cocytos and Pyriphlegethontas, and the water of the Styx, and Tartarus which is as far from the earth as the earth is from the sky, and of the many kinds of punishments.⁴⁸ Even if the pagans were unable to speak the truth about these things as they are, since they followed their own reasonings and certain teachings of ours which they misunderstood, nonetheless they have received a kind of image of the judgment. Among the poets, philosophers, orators, and all writers you will find speculations on these doctrines. You will hear about the Elysian Field, the Isles of the Blessed, the groves, the myrtle trees, the light air, the most pleasant odor, and the choruses who dwell there, garbed in white robes, dancing and singing hymns, and, in a word, the just desserts which await both the wicked and the good after death.

How do you think both the good and the wicked live after reflecting on these things? Are there not some persons who, even if they prosper in this life without pain and with great pleasure, upon reflection are struck, as it were, by the whip of conscience and by the expectation of the frightening things that await them? And, yet, good people, even if they should suffer a thousand misfortunes, have "a hope which nourishes" them, as Pindar says, and which does not allow them to feel the present misfortunes.⁴⁹ Thus, even in this respect our

⁴⁸ Libanius puts on the lips of Socrates a similar description of the underworld in his declamation 2.36, *De silentio Socratis*: "But for those who have lived lawlessly and immorally, their souls filled with many impieties, there are Tartaruses, and Cocytuses, and Pyriphlegethons as receptions and terrible chastisements and eternal punishments in fire and darkness and wierd rivers driven in an unending course." Translation in M. Crosby and W. M. Calder, "On the Silence of Socrates," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 3 (1960) 195. According to Calder, 199-201, Socrates functions in Libanius' discourse as a symbol of Greek paideia in the struggle against Christianity. Libanius presents pagan teaching on the afterlife as a rival to Christian teaching. See also Libanius' funeral oration over Julian, or. 18.272, where Julian's fearlessness of death is likened to that of Socrates and Tartarus and the Isles of the Blessed also are mentioned.

⁴⁹ Chrysostom quotes two words (ἀνὴρ κοῦτοποδοῖ) from fragment 214 of Pindar (Bergk, fr. 233, Boeckh): "With him liveth sweet Hope, the nurse of old, the fosterer of his heart,—Hope, who chiefly ruleth the changeful mind of man." Translation by Sir John Sandys, *Pindar*. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937) 611. The fragment first was preserved in Plato, *Republic* 331a. See P. R. Coleman-Norton, "St. John Chrysostom's Use of the Greek Poets," *Classical Philology* 27 (1932) 217, for a discussion of the reference and its variants.

pleasure is greater than yours. For it is much better to begin with temporary labors and to end with eternal rest than to get a brief taste of things which seem to be most pleasurable and to end with the most bitter and burdensome evils. And when one acknowledges that even in this world the monk's life is more pleasurable, must we not do what I said at the beginning, that is, have pity on those who weep over such goods? Your child should not be mourned, but rather applauded and crowned, for he has entered upon a life without turmoil; he has arrived at the tranquil harbor.

But many fathers who have children engaged in the present life reproach you; some cry when they see you, and others laugh. Why are you not laughing at them or mourning over them? Pay no attention if they mock us, unless they do it with good reason. And if this is the case, we should mourn even if they did not laugh at us. But even if the whole world should laugh and mock us unjustly, we would still consider ourselves blessed and mourn rather for them, since they are the most miserable of all and no better than the insane. For it is typical of insane people and of those who are afflicted with this kind of illness to laugh at things which deserve praise and crowns. Tell me, if everyone praised you, marveled at you, and said that you were most blessed because your son was passionately excited over the madness of dancers and charioteers, would you not think that this was a laughing matter? So if they mock and laugh at noble and praiseworthy deeds, why do you not say that they are out of their minds? Let us do this even now; do not let your opinion about your son be determined by the views of the crowd, but by a careful examination of rational arguments. You will see that those who are laughing are the parents of children who are slaves in comparison with your son and not free men.

At the moment you are unable to see plainly because your mind is clouded by emotion. But when you are calmer and when your son has proven his great virtue, it no longer will be necessary to speak to you; instead you yourself will speak these words to others, and even more than these. My prophecy is not a groundless one, but it is based on my own experience. For I had a good friend whose father was a pagan, wealthy, illustrious and notable in every way. At first this father stirred up magistrates, threatened his son with prison, and, after stripping him of everything, left the young man in a foreign land lacking even necessary sustenance; he hoped by this to persuade him to return to the worldly life. But when he saw that his son did not

yield to any of this abuse, the father was won over and sang the *palinode*, as it were.⁵⁰ Now he honors and praises his son more than he does his own father. And although he has many other children who are illustrious, he says that they are not even worthy to be the servants of that son; now he himself is much more renowned on account of his son.

The same will happen in the case of your son, and the facts themselves will teach you that I do not lie. Therefore I will now be silent, asking only this of you: wait for but a year, or even less. Virtue among Christians does not require many days, since it grows by divine grace. You will see all that we have said displayed in actions. And then not only will you approve what has happened, but, if you are willing to rouse yourself even a little, you quickly will come to share your son's zeal, and he will become your teacher of virtue.

⁵⁰ That is, "he uttered a recantation." The term "*palinode*" first was used of an ode by the lyric poet Stesichorus in which he recanted his attack upon Helen. See the legend told in Plato, *Phaedrus* 243ab. The phrase "to sing the *palinode*" is found frequently in Libanius. See Fabricius, *Zu den Jugendschriften* 128.

Book Three

To the Christian Parent

1. Now let us teach the Christian parent that he should not attack those who urge his son to please God. Indeed, there is a danger that our speech might be superfluous and that the opposite of what I mentioned above might happen. Earlier I said that the rule of this competition did not require me to battle against a pagan. The apostle Paul, when he ordered us to judge only those within our own camp, allowed us to be free from doing battle with those on the outside.¹ But now, it seems, there is no need to argue with a Christian. For if previously it seemed shameful to discuss these things with a Christian, this is all the more the case now. For will not the Christian slink away and hide if he requires correction in this matter, if even the pagan had nothing to answer us?

What shall we do? Shall we be silent for this reason and say nothing? By no means! For if someone could promise and prove to us that no one would ever dare to do such things again, we then would have to keep silent and allow past offenses to be forgotten. But since no one can provide us with a trustworthy guarantee, it remains necessary to speak a word of admonition. For if our speech finds people sick with this illness, it will do its job; but if no one falls prey to this illness, then our prayers have been answered. For even doctors, after they have prepared medicines for the sick, ought to hope that the sick person will not continue to need these medicines. Likewise, we also pray that none of our brothers should need this correction. But if

¹ Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:12. See above, p. 97.

it should happen, God forbid, a "second sailing," as the proverb goes, will not escape them.²

Imagine, then, a father who is a Christian, one like the pagan in every way, except for his religious beliefs; suppose that he mourns like the pagan and rolls before the feet of all. Picture him displaying his grey hair and speaking of his old age, his solitude, and everything else; let him provoke the judges to anger as much as he wishes. But, in the case of this man, it is no longer before humans that judgment is passed. For he has heard the words which Spirit-filled persons have spoken among us concerning the horrid and fearsome tribunal in the next life. It is necessary, above all, to remember that day and the fire which flows like a river, the flame which is never extinguished, the sun which does not shine, the moon which is hidden, the falling stars, and sky turning round, the powers in confusion, the earth everywhere shaken and boiling, the terrible, alternating sound of the trumpets, the angels traversing the world, the thousands standing by, the sign shining before them, the ready throne, the opened books, the unapproachable glory, the fearsome and terrible voice of the Judge as he sends some into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels, as he shuts the gates to others after much labor for virginity, as he orders some of his servants to bind up the chaff and throw it into the furnace, while commanding others to bind the rest hand and foot, to strangle them with bare hands and drag them into the outer darkness and hand them over to the deadly gnashing of teeth. With the most violent and bitter punishment he afflicts one simply for gazing with impure eyes, another for laughing at the wrong time, another for condemning his neighbor without examination, another merely for slander. The one who will inflict these torments has spoken and warned that punishment also is delivered for these crimes.

2. All of us must approach this Judge in the next life and see that day on which all things will be laid bare—I do not mean words and deeds only, but even one's very thoughts. Although these acts seem to be insignificant now, on that day we shall suffer terrible chastisements. For the Judge demands of us with the same strictness

² A "second sailing" (ὁ δεύτερος . . . ναυός) was proverbial for "the next best way."

It refers to the use of oars after the winds have failed. Cf. Menander, fr. 241.

both our own and our neighbor's, salvation.³ That is why Paul everywhere urges everyone to seek not merely their own interest, but also the interest of their neighbor. And for this reason he vigorously censured the Corinthians, because they did not show concern or care for the man committing fornication, but rather overlooked the wound which afflicted him.⁴ And writing to the Galatians he said: *Brethren, if a person is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him.*⁵ And to the Thessalonians he had previously given the same admonishment, saying: *Therefore, encourage one another, just as you are doing, and again, Admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak.*⁶

Let no one say, "What business is it of mine to care for others? The one who perishes, let him perish! The one who is saved, let him be saved! Their doings are not my business; I am enjoined only to look after my own affairs." To prevent anyone from saying such things, to eliminate this savage and inhuman thought, Paul abolished it with these laws and commanded that a person should often neglect his own affairs to support those of his neighbors, and he determined that this strict way of life was to be observed everywhere.

Writing to the Romans, Paul ordered them to exercise great care in this matter, urging the strong to be like parents to the weak and persuading the former to be anxious for the salvation of the latter.⁷ In this passage he speaks in the form of an exhortation and a counsel, but elsewhere he shakes the souls of his hearers with great vehemence.⁸ For those who neglect the salvation of their brothers, he says, sin against Christ himself and tear down the temple of God.⁹ And he does not say this on his own authority, but on instruction from the Teacher. For the Only-begotten of God, wishing to teach that this is a necessary duty, and that great misfortunes await those who do not wish to fulfill it, said: *Whoever should scandalize one of these little ones, it would be*

³ The communal character of Christian salvation will become a persistent theme in Chrysostom's later preaching. See, for example, his homily 9.2 on Genesis (PG 54.623) and the discussion by F. Leduc, "L'eschatologie, une préoccupation centrale de saint Jean Chrysostome," 129-31.

⁴ Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 and 10:24.

⁵ Galatians 6:1.

⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14.

⁷ Cf. Romans 15:17.

⁸ Chrysostom uses the rhetorical term "form" (ἰδέε) to refer to the style of Paul's discourse. This sort of rhetorical analysis is typical of Chrysostom's exegesis and in some ways anticipates certain modern critical approaches.

⁹ Cf. 1 Corinthians 8:12.

*better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.*¹⁰ And the person who presented his talent is afflicted with the same punishment, not because he overlooked any of his own affairs, but because he neglected the salvation of his neighbors.

So, then, even if we live our own lives perfectly, we gain nothing, since that sin is sufficient to cast us into the depths of gehenna. For if nothing can save those who refuse to assist their neighbor in material needs and who have been cast out of the bridal chamber, even if they have practiced virginity, how is it possible that the person who has neglected what is much greater (for care of the soul is much more important) will not suffer every terrible punishment?¹¹ For God did not create man to provide only for himself, but to provide for many others as well. That is why Paul calls the faithful "lights," signifying that they are required to be useful to others.¹² For a light would not be a light if it shed its rays only upon itself.

That is why he says that those who neglect their neighbors are even worse than the pagans, speaking in this way: *If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his own family, he has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*¹³ What does he want to show when he uses the word "provide"? Is it to supply the necessities of life? I think he is talking about care for the soul. But if you are eager to disagree with me, my argument will be established all the more strongly. For if Paul speaks in this way about bodily needs, if he prescribes such a punishment for someone who does not provide this daily nourishment, if he says that such a person is worse than the pagans, where shall we rank the person who neglects a duty which is greater and even more necessary?

3. So, then, let us calculate the gravity of your sin, ascending step by step we will demonstrate that the greatest sin of all and the absolute height of wickedness is to neglect one's children. Now, the first degree of evil, wickedness, and cruelty is to neglect one's friends. No, let us begin our speech on an even lower level. Somehow or other I almost forgot that the old Law, which was given to the Jews, did not

¹⁰ Matthew 18:6.

¹¹ Cf. Matthew 25:1-13. Chrysostom frequently refers to the parable of the "foolish virgins" to underscore the limited value of a merely physical virginity. See, for example, his treatise *On Virginity* 77. Later Chrysostom will apply this text particularly to the importance of almsgiving. See homily 78 on Matthew (PG 58, 711).

¹² Cf. Philippians 2:15.

¹³ 1 Timothy 5:8.

allow them even to neglect the heads of burden of their enemies, whether they fell down or became lost, but the Law commanded them to lead back the lost and to raise up the fallen.¹⁴

Therefore, the first degree of wickedness and cruelty, beginning with the least important, is to neglect the flocks and animals of one's enemies when they suffer misfortune. The second degree, greater than the first, is to neglect one's enemies. For as much as a human person is more precious than an irrational animal, so much greater is this sin than the first. The third degree after this is to neglect one's brothers, even if they should be unknown. The fourth is to overlook one's own household. The fifth, when we disregard not only their bodily needs, but also the vital needs of their souls. The sixth, when we neglect not only our household, but also our children as they become corrupted. The seventh, when we do not seek out others to care for them. The eighth, when we even hinder and drive away from our children those who wish to care for them. The ninth, when we not only hinder them, but even attack them. And so, if such a great punishment is inflicted on the person in the first, second and third degrees of wickedness, how great a fire will befall you who stand in the ninth degree, which surpasses all the rest?

In fact, I would not be mistaken to call this not merely the ninth, or the tenth degree, but even the eleventh degree. Why is this? Because not only is this sin much greater by nature than those enumerated above, but it also is worse on account of the time. What do I mean by "on account of the time"? That we, who now commit the very same sins as those who were under the old Law, will not suffer the same torments, but rather much greater torments, for we have enjoyed a greater gift, partaken of a more perfect teaching, and received a greater honor. Therefore, since both nature and time make this sin so dreadful, consider how great a fire will fall upon the heads of those who dare to commit it.

To prove that what I have said is not mere conjecture, I will present factual evidence so that you may know that, even if we conduct all our own affairs properly, we shall receive the most severe punishment if we neglect the salvation of our children. I will not speak my own words to you, but I will rely on the sacred scriptures. There was a priest among the Jews, a moderate and temperate man, whose name was Eli. Eli was the father of two sons. When he saw them beginning to do evil, he did not restrain them or prevent them; or, rather, he

¹⁴ Cf. Exodus 23:4-5.

restrained them and prevented them, but he did not do this with sufficient zeal.¹⁵ The crimes of these children were fornication and gluttony. Scripture says that they ate before the holy meats were sanctified and before the sacrifice was offered to God. When their father learned of this, he did not punish them, but by verbal exhortation he tried to turn them from this wickedness; he continually spoke to them in this way: *Do not, my children, do not act in this way, for it is not a good report which I hear about you, that you cause the people not to worship the Lord. If a man should sin against a man, they will intercede for him to the Lord. But if a person should sin against the Lord, who will intercede for him?*¹⁶

Certainly, his words were quite severe; they were humiliating and capable of converting any sensible person. He pointed out their crime, showed its seriousness, and plainly declared the unbearable and terrible judgment which awaited them. However, since Eli did not do all that was required of him, he perished along with his sons. He should have threatened them, cast them from his sight, beaten them, and been much stricter and more severe. Since he did none of these things, he incurred God's wrath on himself and on his children; by sparing them at the wrong time, he destroyed his own salvation as well as that of his children.

Listen to what God says to him, or, rather, what he no longer says to him. For God has judged him to be no longer worthy of an answer; rather, as in the case of a household slave who has committed a most serious offence, God uses another to inform him of the evils which are to befall him. Such was the wrath of God at that time. Listen, then, to what he says about the teacher [Eli] to his disciple [Samuel]. To the disciple, and to another prophet, and to everyone God spoke concerning the evils to befall Eli, rather than speak directly to Eli, so thoroughly had God rejected him.

What, then, did God say to Samuel? *He knew that his sons cursed God, and he did not correct them.*¹⁷ However, this is not exactly true because Eli certainly did correct his sons, but God says that his was not a true correction. God condemned his warning because it was not sufficiently forceful. Therefore, even if we show concern for our children, if we fail to do what is necessary, it will not be true concern, just as Eli's correction was not a true one. After God had stated the charge

against Eli, he added the punishment with great wrath. *For I have sworn, he said, to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering for ever.*¹⁸ Do you see God's intense anger and merciless punishment? Eli must perish utterly, he says, and not only him and his children, but his entire household with him, and there will be no remedy to heal this wound. Except for the man's negligence in regard to his children, however, God had no other charge to make against the elder at that time; in all other respects Eli was a marvelous man.

One can measure his philosophy not only from the rest of his life, but especially from his behavior after this catastrophe. After hearing God's threats and realizing that he would face the most severe punishment, Eli showed no grief or bitterness. Nor did he say what the crowd usually does: "Do I control other peoples' choices? I am responsible for my own sins. The children have reached adulthood, and they alone should be punished." Eli did not say or think anything like this. But like a prudent servant whose only thought is to bear patiently whatever comes from the master, even if it should be painful, in this way Eli spoke words full of much philosophy: *The Lord himself, he says, will do what seems best to him.*¹⁹

This is not the only example of the man's virtue. Once the Jews were engaged in a war and someone came and announced to Eli the catastrophes which had occurred. When Eli heard that his sons had fallen shamefully and miserably in the battle, he remained silent. But when the messenger added, after announcing their death, that the ark had been captured by the enemy, then the old man, overshadowed with grief, *fell from his seat backwards against the door, and his back was broken, for he was an elder and heavy and honorable, and he had judged Israel for twenty years.*²⁰

If, then, a priest, an elder, an honorable man, who ruled the Hebrew nation for twenty years without fault, who lived in times which did not require much perfection, could find no excuse in these actions; if he died a violent and miserable death because he did not care for his children with diligence; and if this sin of negligence, like a great, wild tidal wave, overcame all these actions and wiped out all his virtuous deeds, what punishment will be reserved for us who live in times which require much greater philosophy and who lack the virtue of Eli?

¹⁵ Cf. 1 Samuel 2:16 ff.

¹⁶ 1 Samuel 2:23-25.

¹⁷ 1 Samuel 3:13.

¹⁸ 1 Samuel 3:14.

¹⁹ 1 Samuel 3:18.

²⁰ 1 Samuel 4:18.

Not only do we not direct our children properly, but we even plot against and attack those who wish to do this, and we act more savagely than any barbarian towards our offspring. Indeed, the savageness of barbarians involves only slavery, destruction, captivity of the homeland, and evils of the body, but you enslave the very soul and, after binding it like some prisoner, hand it over to fierce and wicked demons and to their passions. For you are doing nothing else but this when you neither give them spiritual exhortation yourself nor allow others who wish to do so.

And let no one say to me that many people have neglected their own children more than Eli did and yet have suffered nothing comparable. Often many have suffered a worse fate than his on account of that sin. For whence come untimely deaths and serious and chronic illness, both our own and our children's? Whence come fines and calamities and insults and a thousand misfortunes? Do they not come from neglecting children when they are wicked? The sufferings of Eli the elder are enough to prove that this is not mere conjecture. But I also will say a word to you about these matters from a certain sage on our side. On the topic of children he has this to say: *Do not rejoice over impious children. Unless the fear of God is with them, do not count on their survival.*²¹ For you will wail with untimely grief and you will see their sudden demise. Many, as I have said, often have suffered in this way. Even if some have escaped, they will not escape in the end, but they will suffer the greatest misfortune, for when they have gone to the next life, they will pay a more bitter penalty.

"Why, then," you ask, "is not everyone punished in this life?" Because God has established the day on which he will judge the world, and this day has not yet come; if it were otherwise, our entire race already would have been destroyed and exterminated. But so that this might not happen and so that the crowd might not become too lazy while awaiting judgment day, God takes certain people who are guilty of sin and punishes them in this life to teach the rest through them the measure of punishment which awaits them. [He does this] so that they might know that, even if they do not pay the penalty in this life, when they go to the next they will pay a penalty that is far more severe. Let us not be careless because God does not send a prophet today and does not threaten punishment as he did to Eli. For now is

²¹ Sirach 16:1-3.

not the time for prophets, or, rather, he sends prophets even now,²² for what was said to people in the past is said to us as well. Through Eli and his sufferings God speaks not only to Eli, but to all who sin as he did. For God is no respecter of persons, nor does he allow those who sin more grievously to go unpunished, when he destroys the one who sins less seriously along with his whole household.

4. This is not to say that the matter is unimportant to him; God shows great concern for the education of children. He has endowed nature with a powerful desire which by a kind of inescapable necessity leads parents to care for their children. Later, when he spoke to us, he imposed laws which prescribed care for them. When God established the feasts, he commanded that [the Jews] should teach their children the reason [for the feasts]. For example, when he spoke about the Passover, he added: *And you will announce to your son on that day, saying, "For this reason God did this for me, that I came out of Egypt."*²³ And in the Law he does the same thing, after speaking about the first-born, again he adds: *But if your son should ask you later on, "What does this mean?" you will say to him, "With a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of cattle. Therefore, I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb."*²⁴

All these commands were given to lead them to a knowledge of God. Even to children he gave many commands concerning those who had begotten them; he honored those who were well disposed, punished the arrogant, and thereby made them even dearer to their parents. When we are put in charge of another person, the honor imposes on us a great responsibility to care for that person. If nothing else, the fact that the fate of that person is entirely in our hands is enough to shame us, and we could not be brought easily to betray the one who has been entrusted to us. But if, as a result of negligence on our part, someone should become angry and disturbed with us more than people who are afflicted with insults, and if this person should punish us severely, this will draw us even more to our duty. This, then, is what God has done.

²² At this point the *Patrologia graeca* text prints several words that are omitted in Dubner's edition: "What is the proof of this? They have, he says, *Moses and the prophets*" (Luke 16:29).

²³ Exodus 13:8.

²⁴ Exodus 13:14-15

In addition to these incentives, God has added a third bond, a natural one, which is, if you will, the most important. In order that parents might not despise God's injunctions, since they have been commanded to raise children, God has added the obligation imposed by nature. But in order that this bond, which is weakened when children are disrespectful, might not be broken, he established a bulwark of punishment both at his hands and at the hands of the parents, so as to render the children perfectly submissive and thereby to stimulate their parents' love.

And this is not all, but in another way, a fourth way, he has bound us tightly and firmly to our children. Not only does God punish children who behave badly toward their parents, not only does he receive favorably those who are good, but he also does the same thing to the parents, severely punishing those who neglect their children, but honoring and praising those who care for them. Eli the elder was punished simply for his negligence, although he was notable in other respects, and God honored the patriarch Abraham for his concern in this matter, no less than for his other virtues. Speaking of those many great gifts which he promised to give to him, and expressing the reason, God said: *I know that Abraham will put in order his sons, and his household with him, and they will keep the ways of the Lord God by doing righteousness and justice.*²⁵

I say these things now so that we may realize that God will not easily tolerate those who neglect the ones who are so dear to him. He cannot labor on behalf of their salvation, while others disdain to show concern for them. However, he will not overlook it, but he will be most displeased and violently angry, as the facts have shown. That is why the blessed Paul continually speaks this exhortation: *Fathers, bring up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*²⁶ If we are commanded to watch over their souls so as to render an account, this is required much more of the father who bore and raised the child and who has him constantly at home. Just as one cannot excuse or apologize for one's own sins, so also there are no excuses for the sins of one's children. Once again the blessed Paul makes this very clear. When prescribing what sort of people were acceptable as leaders, besides all the other requisite virtues, he demands of them that they show concern for their children, as if we could find no pardon if they should turn out perverse, and right he was.²⁷

²⁵ Genesis 18:19.

²⁶ Ephesians 6:4.

²⁷ Cf. 1 Timothy 3:4.

If wickedness were in people by nature, then one would have the right to make excuses. But since it is by free choice that we become either wicked or good, what specious excuse could a person offer, if he allowed the one he loved so much to become wicked and perverted? Is it that he did not wish to make him a good person? But no parent would say this, for nature has appointed him to this task and continually urges him on to it. Was he unable to carry it out? This is no excuse. Since he received the child in his tender years, and since he was the first and the only one to have authority over him, and since he has the child at home with him all the time, his job as guardian is quite easy and manageable. Therefore, there is no other reason that children become corrupted than from madness over worldly things. When parents are concerned only with their own affairs and do not wish to give priority to their children's, they necessarily neglect their children, as well as their own souls.

I would say that these parents (and do not think that I am speaking out of anger) are even worse than those who kill their children. For the latter separate the body from the soul, but the former take the soul along with the body and throw them both into the fire of gehenna. By nature everyone must undergo [physical] death sooner or later; but the other death could be avoided, if it were not inflicted by the negligence of the parents. Moreover the death of the body will immediately end at the coming of the resurrection, but the death of the soul will find no such remedy. There will be no salvation in its future, only an eternity of inescapable punishments. It is not without reason, then, that we say that such parents are worse than those who kill their children. To sharpen a sword, take it in hand, and plunge it into the very throat of one's child, is not so terrible as to destroy and corrupt the soul, for to us there is nothing equal to this.

5. "What, then?" you say, "Cannot the person who lives in the city and has a house and a wife be saved?" Certainly, there is not one way of salvation, but there are many and varied ways. Christ said this in indefinite terms when he declared that there were many mansions in the Father's house.²⁹ But Paul speaks of this with some exactness when he writes: *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.*³⁰ What he means is this: some people shine like the sun, others

²⁸ On the notion of "free choice" (*ipsoi poieo*) in Chrysostom's moral psychology, see the comments above, p. 75, n. 19.

²⁹ Cf. John 14:2.

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:41.

like the moon, others like the stars. And in this passage he did not stress the difference; rather, he shows that there is great variety within a single class of objects, a variety as great as the number of objects. *For star*, he says, *differs from star in glory*. Imagine, starting with the magnitude of the sun and going to the tiniest of all the stars, how many degrees one would descend in levels of dignity. If you were to lead your son to the imperial palace, and do and suffer all things, and persuade him to do likewise, so as to place him close to the emperor, and if you were to take into account nothing at all, neither the expense, nor the danger, nor death itself; but if, when the question of enrolling in the heavenly army is raised, you are not upset to see him take the last place and become the least of all, is this not absurd?

But, if you will, let us see whether it is possible for someone who is involved in worldly activities to obtain even this portion. The blessed Paul made a brief statement about this when he declared that those who have wives could be saved only if they lived with them as if they did not have them and only if they did not misuse the world.³¹ But, if you will, let us examine this in our speech. Could you affirm that your son heard you teaching, or that he learned on his own, that the person who swears, even if he is faithful to his oath, offends the one God? And that the one who remembers injuries also cannot be saved? For Scripture says, *the ways of those who remember injuries lead to death*.³² And that God so disdains the slanderer that he is forbidden to read the holy Scriptures? And that he will cast out the braggart and the arrogant from heaven and hand them over to the fire of gehenna? And that he punishes as an adulterer the person who merely gazes with impure eyes? And that sin which everyone has the opportunity to commit, namely judging one's neighbors, which merits the most severe punishment, have you ever warned him to avoid it and have you read to him the laws of Christ which were laid down about these matters? Or are you also unaware that such laws exist? How then will your son be able to conduct himself properly in these matters, when his father who should teach him does not know the laws?

I wish the only calamity were that parents give no useful advice to their children; this would not be so bad. But now you even push them in the opposite direction. When parents urge their children to study

³¹ Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:29, 31.

³² Proverbs 12:28.

rhetoric, all they say are words like this: "A certain man, of low estate, born of lowly parents, after achieving the power that comes from rhetoric, obtained the highest positions, gained great wealth, married a rich woman, built a splendid house, and is feared and respected by all." And another one says, "A certain man after learning Latin became illustrious in the emperor's service and he manages and administers all internal business."³⁴ And another one cites a third example. And they talk of those who become illustrious on earth, but no one ever mentions those in heaven; and if someone should attempt to mention this, he is chased away as a troublemaker.

6. Therefore, from the beginning whenever you sing songs for your children, teach them nothing else but what is at the base of all evils, inculcate in them what are the two most tyrannical lusts, I mean the love of money and—what is even more wicked—the love of vain and empty glory. Either of these alone is capable of subverting all things, but when both of them come together and attack the tender soul of a youth, like torrential rivers flowing together, they destroy all its virtues, gathering together so many thorns, so much sand, so much rubbish that they render the soul sterile and unable to produce any good.

Even the words of pagan writers will testify to this for us. The first of these passions [the love of money], even on its own and without the cooperation of the other passion, is called by one the "height" and by another the "chief" of evils.³⁵ If, considered separately, the first is the height and chief, when the one that is much worse and more powerful is added—I mean the madness for glory—and when it joins the first and attacks and puts out roots and seizes the soul of the youth, who, then, will be able to extirpate this disease, especially when even the parents do and say everything, not for these wicked plants to be

³³ The term λόγος, translated here as "rhetoric," is quite broad in its range of meanings. Elsewhere I have rendered it as "literary studies" or "education." Λόγος, as was noted above, p. 5, was Libanius' favorite term for his own educational system.

³⁴ Latin and law were rivals to Libanius' beloved λόγος, and he constantly means the flight of young men to the profitable careers afforded by these studies. See J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch* 242–55.

³⁵ Love of money as the "height" (ὑψιστός) and "chief" (κεφαλὴν) of all evils was a well-known pagan sentiment, as Chrysostom has noted. Cf. his homily 63.4 on Matthew (PG 58.608). Further parallels in Greco-Roman literature can be found in Fabricius, *Zu den Jugendschriften* 136–37.

uprooted, but for them to be made secure?³⁶ Who is so senseless that he does not despair of the salvation of a child who has received this kind of education? They should want the soul to enjoy the very opposite instruction and to avoid vice. But when the advantages of money are always being touted and when damnable men are proposed for emulation, what hope of salvation can there be? For those who love money inevitably become envious, malicious, blasphemous, perjurous, arrogant, abusive, deceitful, shameless, reckless, unfeeling and full of all wickedness.

The blessed Paul gives trustworthy testimony on this matter, when he says that the love of money is the root of evils in this life.³⁷ Before him, Christ revealed the same thing, declaring that it is impossible both to serve God and to be enslaved to that passion.³⁸ If, then, from the beginning a young person is led into that slavery, how can he ever become free, how can he resist the flood, when everything works against him, when everything conspires to plunge him beneath the surface and to force his death by drowning? If no one caused him trouble, and if, rather, many people extended a hand, and if he were able to rise up, to see clearly, and to wash off the brine of evil, would this not be desirable? If, after a long time of singing the divine hymns, he is able to banish the diseases that afflict people, would he not merit a thousand praises, a thousand crowns?

Habit is a terrible thing, terrible enough to capture and rule the soul, especially when it has pleasure acting in conjunction with it, but that habit, toward which we are hastening and which we are eager to attain, causes us to labor greatly. For this reason, when it was necessary to cleanse the children of the Hebrews of their old habit of vices which they had learned in Egypt, God took them alone into the desert, removing them as far as possible from the corrupters. There in the desert, as if in a kind of monastery, he completely molded their souls, applying every means of healing, both harsh and gentle, and he omitted nothing at all which could assist in healing them. However,

³⁶ Chrysostom's polemic against vainglory cannot be separated from his more general attack on Greek culture. F. Leduc has suggested that Chrysostom's hostility to the pursuit of glory is a direct reaction to the exaltation of glory by contemporary pagans such as Julian and Libanius. See his "La thème de la vaine gloire chez saint Jean Chrysostome," *Proche-orient chrétienne* 29 (1969) 3-32, and especially 21-32. The preceding and following references to rhetorical education make this hypothesis very likely.

³⁷ Cf. I Timothy 6:10.

³⁸ Cf. Matthew 6:24.

they did not reject evil, but in the midst of the manna, they sought onions and garlic and all the wickedness of Egypt. Such is the evil of habit! Then, after enjoying so much attention from God, after receiving a leader who was so great and noble, after being educated by fear and threats and favors and punishments and in every way, and after seeing such great wonders, the Jews did not become better.

But do you think that your young son who is in the midst of Egypt—or, rather, who is caught in the midst of the devil's troops—who hears no one giving him useful advice, who sees everyone leading him in the opposite direction, especially those who bore him and raised him, do you think that he can escape the devil's snares? How? From the warnings that you give? But you urge him on to the opposite things and do not allow him to pay heed to philosophy even in a dream. Rather, by turning the present life and its benefits over and over, you cause him to be tossed by even greater waves.

Can he do it on his own, all by himself? But certainly the young person cannot practice virtue all on his own. If, perhaps, he produces something noble, before it has time to grow it will quickly be drowned in the flood of words which comes from you. Just as the body which does not enjoy healthy foods, but is reared on sickly ones, cannot survive for long, so also the soul which has received such an education will never conceive anything noble or great. Inevitably it will become weak and soft, since it is continually attacked by evil as if by consumption, and eventually it will be thrown into gehenna to be destroyed there.

7. If you should say that things are not this way, and that it is possible to practice virtue perfectly even while living in the world, and if you should say this not in jest, but in earnest, do not hesitate to teach us this new and incredible doctrine. For I do not wish to undertake such great matters in vain, nor in the midst of such goods to abstain for no reason. But I am not able to learn this doctrine, for you do not permit it, and through your words and deeds you contradict this decree and teach an opposite doctrine. As if you desired to destroy your sons intentionally, you command them to do all the things which make it impossible for them to be saved.

Look at the matter once again. *Woe to you who laugh*, he says.³⁹ But you provide many occasions for them to laugh. *Woe to you who are rich*.⁴⁰ But you do everything so that they might make money.

³⁹ Luke 6:25.

⁴⁰ Luke 6:24.

Woe to you when all men speak well of you ⁴¹ But you frequently deplete all of your resources for the sake of being esteemed by the crowd. Again, the person who insults his brother is liable to gehenna. But you think that they are weak and timid if they bear in silence insults inflicted by others. Christ commands us to despise fighting and litigation. But you constantly involve them in these evils. Many times he commanded us to cut out the eye, if it should cause harm. But you especially make friends with those who are able to give money, even if they should teach the worst evil. He did not allow divorce, except in the case of adultery. But you, whenever it is possible to make money, also teach them to despise this precept. He totally forbade oaths. But you laugh if you see any oath being kept. *He who loves his life, he said, will lose it.* ⁴² But in every way you push them towards this love. *If you do not forgive people their sins, he says, your heavenly Father will not forgive you.* ⁴³ But you reproach them if ever they decline to defend themselves against injustice, and you urge them to seize that power quickly. Christ declared that the love of glory renders all works vain, even prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. But you do everything in order that they might gain glory. What need is there to list all sins when those we have mentioned are enough to merit a thousand gehennas, not only all these sins taken together, but also each individual one? But when you gather them all together and heap up an unbearable burden of sins, you send them into a river of fire. How can they be saved, when they feed so much fuel to the fire?

And this is not the only terrible thing, that you instruct them in ways contrary to the precepts of Christ, but you dress up vice in fine sounding names, calling constant attendance at the racetrack and theatre "urbanity," and to be wealthy "freedom," and to lust for glory "magnanimity," and madness "confidence," and prodigality "philanthropy," and injustice "courage." Then, as if this fraud were not enough, you also call virtue by contrary names, calling temperance "poorishness," fairness "cowardice," justice "weakness," modesty "servility," tolerance of evil "lack of strength." ⁴⁴ You act as if you

⁴¹ Luke 6:26.

⁴² John 12:25.

⁴³ Matthew 6:15.

⁴⁴ The actions which Chrysostom condemns all are associated in some way with traditional Hellenic ideals of civic virtue. The emperor Julian had attacked the pleasure-loving Antiochenes on similar grounds and argued that his own philosophical virtues were considered vices by the populace. See Julian, *Misopogon* 351b, and my comments above, pp. 65-66.

were afraid that the children would flee such outrage if they heard the true names of these things from others!

For to call vices by their bare and proper names helps to no small degree in avoiding them. It strikes sinners with such power that those who are famous for their shameful acts often do not take it well when they are called what they are, but they become angry and quite savage, as if they were suffering the most terrible misfortunes. For if you called a woman an adulteress and a boy a fornicator because of shamefulness of their behavior, you would become their irreconcilable enemy, as if you had committed the greatest injustice. And they are not the only ones who act this way, but you can see greedy persons, drunkards, braggarts, and all who do terrible and reckless deeds mourning and weeping, not so much because of their actions and the opinion of the crowd, as because of the names applied to their actions. And I know many who have become temperate and more reasonable as a result of being reproached. But you have removed even this remedy.

And, what is worse, you give this encouragement to them, not only through your words, but also through your deeds by building splendid houses, buying very expensive fields, and surrounding yourself with other forms of pomp, and in every way overshadowing their souls, as it were, with a kind of dense cloud. How can I be persuaded that they will be saved, when I see them being urged to do those things which Christ said would bring perdition on those who do them, when I see you despising their soul as if it were something incidental, while paying attention to truly superfluous things as if they were necessary and essential? You do everything for your child to have a servant, a horse and the most beautiful toga. But that he might become good, you never allow yourself even to think about this. Although you extend your zeal to wood and stones, you do not deem the soul worthy of the smallest bit of your attention. You endure all things so that a magnificent statue might be put in the house and so that the roof might be golden. But that the most honorable of all statues—the soul—might be golden, you do not wish to give a thought to this.

8. But I have not yet mentioned the greatest of the evils, nor have I revealed the chief catastrophe. Often I have begun to broach the subject and blushed; often I have been ashamed. What am I talking about? It is time to be daring and to speak. For it would be an act of great cowardice, if in our desire to cast out something evil we did not try to speak about this, as if silence by itself could heal the disease. Therefore, we will not remain silent, even if we must be ashamed and blush a thousand times. For the doctor who wishes to drain an abscess

does not hesitate to take a knife and insert his fingers deep into the wound. Therefore, we, too, will not hesitate to speak about this, inasmuch as this infection is worse.

What, then, is the evil? A new and lawless lust has invaded our life, a terrible and incurable disease has fallen upon us, a plague more terrible than all plagues has struck. A new and unspeakable crime has been devised. Not only written laws, but also the laws of nature have been overturned. Fornication now seems like a minor offense among forms of unchastity. Just as a more powerful feeling of grief can come and wipe out one's prior feeling of grief, so now the excess of this lewdness causes the unspeakable, I mean unlawful intercourse with women, no longer to appear unspeakable. For it is considered desirable to be able to escape these snares, and womankind is in danger of being superfluous when young men take their place in every activity.⁴⁵

Even this is not as terrible as the fact that such a great abomination is performed with great fearlessness and lawlessness has become the law. No one is afraid, no one trembles. No one is ashamed, no one blushes, but they enjoy a good laugh. Those who are self-controlled are thought to be crazy, and those who admonish are considered fools. If they happen to be weaker, they are beaten; if stronger, they are mocked, laughed at, the butt of countless jokes. No benefit comes from law courts or laws or pedagogues or parents or attendants or teachers. Some are corrupted by money, others are concerned only about their pay. Some are more moral and pay attention to the salvation of those entrusted to them; but these are easily deceived and tricked, or else they fear the power of the unchaste. For it would be easier for a suspected tyrant to save himself than it would be for someone who tried to rescue [the youth] from these vile men to escape their hands. Thus, in the middle of the cities, as if in a great desert, males perform shameless acts with males.

⁴⁵ Chrysostom's lengthy tirade against pederasty sometimes is cited as evidence of its widespread practice especially among Christians at Antioch. See, for example, J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 131-32 and A.J. Festugiere, *Antioche païenne et chrétienne* 198-210. While this may be true, one suspects that rhetorical excess has colored Chrysostom's attack on pederasty. Furthermore, pederasty in Chrysostom's mind was a vice intimately associated with Greek paideia and, therefore, this polemic is part of his more general attack on Greek culture. Cf. his treatise *De sancto Babyla* 49 (PG 50.546), where he criticizes Plato and Socrates for teaching that pederasty is "respectable and a part of philosophy."

But if some should escape these snares, only with difficulty will they avoid the reputation of those who indulge in such wicked behavior. First, because they are very few, they would easily be hidden by the crowd of evildoers. Second, because those vile and accursed demons, since they have no other way to punish those who despise them, try to harm their reputation. Since they are unable to deliver a mortal blow, or to reach the soul, they attempt at least to damage the exterior ornament which surrounds them and to destroy all good reputation.

For this reason I have heard many people wondering why a second shower of fire has not yet fallen in our own time, why our city has not yet suffered the fate of Sodom, for it is worthy of a greater punishment, since it has not yet learned from the misfortunes of Sodom. Although that region has cried out for two thousand years—its appearance speaking more loudly than words—to the whole world not to dare such a thing, not only have they not become more timid about this sin, but they have become more audacious, as if contending with God and trying to show by their actions that they will devote themselves more to these evils the more he threatens them.

Why, then, has not something similar happened; how is it that they dare to commit the sins of Sodom, but do not suffer the penalty of Sodom? Because another more terrible fire awaits them and a punishment which has no end. For although the crimes [of the inhabitants of Sodom] who lived at a later time were much more serious than the sins of those who were destroyed by the great flood, no such shower fell as a result of this. The argument is the same in our case. Why did people who lived near the beginning of time, when there were no law courts, when the fear of rulers did not hang over them, when there was no threatening Law or chorus of prophets to train them, no expectation of gehenna, no hope of the Kingdom, no other philosophy, no wonders which could raise up even stones, why did those people who enjoyed none of these advantages suffer such a great penalty for their sins?

On the other hand, why have people in our own day, who partake of all these benefits and who live in the midst of such great fear of both divine and human law courts, why have they not yet suffered the same as those in the past, although they are worthy of greater punishment? Is it not plain even to a child that they are being spared only to receive a more violent punishment? For if we are so angry and indignant, how could God, who cares for the human race most of all, who violently abhors and detests evil, allow these crimes to go unpunished? This is not the way things are, not at all! Without a

doubt he will strike them with his mighty hand, inflict an unbearable blow, and apply torture so painful that what was experienced at Sodom will seem like child's play.

What barbarians, what kind of beasts have they not surpassed in that shameful union? There is in some irrational animals a great passion and an unspeakable desire which is exactly like madness. But although they do not understand this passion, at least they remain within the bounds of nature, even if they should be in heat a thousand times, they will not overturn nature's laws. But these persons who are, so to speak, "rational," who have had the benefit of divine instruction, who say to others what should be done and what should not be done, and who have heard the scriptures which have come down from heaven—these men have intercourse more fearlessly with young boys than with prostitutes! As if they were not human, as if the providence of God did not exist to judge events, as if darkness were all around and no one could see or hear what they do, thus they commit all these reckless deeds in utter madness.

But the parents of the children who are being violated bear it in silence; they do not bury themselves in the earth along with their children, nor do they think of some remedy for that evil. If it were necessary to take the children to a foreign land to save them from this sickness, or to the sea, or to the islands, or to an inaccessible land, or to the world beyond us, should we not do and suffer all things so as not to allow these defilements? If a place were diseased and plague-ridden, would we not take our sons away from there, even if they were about to make great profit, even if they were in the best of health?

But now, when such a great plague has spread everywhere, not only do we ourselves drag them down into the depths, but we drive away those who wish to set them free as if they were corrupters. What rage, what thunderbolts do these crimes not deserve, when we are eager to purify their tongue by means of pagan wisdom, while we not only overlook the soul which lies rotting in the very mire of licentiousness, but even prevent the soul which wishes to rise up? Who, then, still dares to say that those who live in such great wickedness can be saved? For those who escape the madness of unchastity (and these are few) do not escape those tyrannical desires which corrupt all things, namely the love of money and of glory. But most people are afflicted to an even greater degree by both of these desires, as well as by fornication.

Further, when we wish to educate them in rhetoric, we not only remove any obstacles to their instruction, but we also provide support by hiring pedagogues and teachers, by spending money, by providing

lecture from other activities, by shouting to them more frequently than coaches do in the Olympic games that poverty comes from lack of education and that wealth comes from education. We do and say all things, on our own and through others, to lead them to the goal which demands all these efforts and frequently we do not even succeed.

Do we believe, then, that moral virtue and the careful observance of an outstanding way of life will develop by themselves, even when there are such great obstacles to these things? What could be more illogical than this: to attach such honor and importance to what is easy, as if it could not be achieved without great effort, and yet to think that what is much more difficult will come upon us as we sleep, as if it were something cheap and unimportant? For philosophy of soul is more difficult and more laborious than rhetorical education, just as doing is greater than speaking, and deeds require more effort than words.

9. "But," you say, "what need is there of philosophy and a strict way of life for our children?" This is it, this is the very thing which destroys everything, that a matter which is so necessary, which encompasses our whole life, seems to be superfluous and secondary. If someone should see your son lying sick with a physical illness, he would not say, "But why does he need good and fine health?" No, he would take every trouble to restore him to such good health that he would not be sick again. But when the soul is sick, they say that there is no need for medicine, and with these words they dare to call themselves parents!

"What then? Shall we all become philosophers," you say. "Shall we let everything that pertains to this life go to ruin?" It is not philosophy, my good man, but the failure to philosophize which destroys and corrupts everything. Who, tell me, really corrupts the present situation: those who live moderately and morally, or those who devise new and illicit modes of luxury?⁴⁶ Those who try to possess everything, or those who are satisfied with what they have? Those who have phalanxes of servants and who parade around with a swarm of flatterers and parasites, or those who think that only one servant is enough for them (for I am not treating the height of philosophy, but only what is accessible to most people)? Those who

⁴⁶ In the remainder of this paragraph Chrysostom employs the rhetorical device *ἐनावροπό*, the repetition of a word or words at the head of successive cola, in this case the article *οἱ*. On this device see T.E. Ameringer, *The Stylistic Influence of the Second Sophistic* 30: "Hermogenes informs us that the sophists employed it with a view to *βεβοήγη* and ranges it among the figures that give beauty to style."

love humanity, who are gentle and who have no need of the honor of the multitude, or those who demand honor from their fellow citizens more than any debt, who cause countless calamities for anyone who does not stand up in respect, greet them first, bow down and act like a slave in their presence? Those who practice obedience, or those who desire political positions and offices and who are willing to do and to suffer everything for this? Those who say that they are better than everyone else and who, therefore, think that they can do and say all things, or those who count themselves among the least and who, therefore, reproach the irrational power of the passions? Those who live in splendid houses and who prepare richly laden tables, or those who desire nothing more than the necessary food and shelter? Those who carve out for themselves thousands of acres of land, or those who think it unnecessary to own even one little plot? Those who compile interest upon interest and pursue the unjust path of all commerce, or those who tear apart these unjust contracts and aid the needy out of their own resources? Those who reflect upon the worthlessness of human nature, or those who do not wish to see this and who with consummate arrogance reject the thought that they are mortal? Those who keep mistresses and wreck other people's marriages, or those who abstain even from their own wives?

Does not the one group, like tumors in the body and raging winds at sea, grow upon the community of the world and through their incontinence toss like a storm those who could be saved if they were left alone? Do not the others, like lights shining in deep darkness, call those who are in the midst of shipwrecks into their own security and, by raising the lamps of philosophy on high, thus lead those who are willing into the harbor of the unencumbered life? Do not the former cause wars, conflicts, battles, the destruction of cities, slavery, servitude, captivities, slaughter and countless misfortunes in this life—not only what happens among people by human agency, but also what comes from above, such as droughts, heavy rains, earthquakes, landslides, the flooding of cities, famine, plagues, and everything else which heaven sends us?

10. And so, these are the ones who overthrow the community, who corrupt the interests of all. These are the ones who cause innumerable calamities for others, who torment those who wish to live in peace, who drag them from every place and attack them. They are the reason we have lawcourts, laws, penalties, and various types of punishments. Just as in a household where many are sick and few are healthy, you could see many medicines, many doctors going in, so, too, in the world there is no people, no city, where there are not many laws, many

rulers and many penalties. For the medicines alone are not able to heal the sick person, but there must also be people to apply the medicines; such are the judges who force the sick, willingly or unwillingly, to accept the healing. However, the sickness has become so powerful that it has defeated even the skill of the doctors and has attacked even the judges. It is as if a person, oppressed by fever, dropsy and countless other more dreadful sufferings, could not overcome his own misfortunes, but turned to others to free him, while they themselves are afflicted by the same terrible diseases. For a flood of wickedness, like a torrent which has burst through all obstacles, has been violently poured forth into human souls.

And why do I speak only of the overthrow of the community? The danger is that the plague created by these wicked men might discredit those who speak about God's providence. Thus it goes forth, spreads and hastens to encompass all things; it has turned everything upside down; finally, it makes war upon heaven itself, arming men's tongues to speak no longer against their fellow servants, but now against the Master himself who rules all things. For why, tell me, is there so much talk everywhere about Fate?⁴⁷ Why does the multitude attribute events to the irrational movement of the stars? Why do some people pay honor to Fortune, or to Chance?⁴⁸ Why do they think that all things move without rhyme or reason? Is it the fault of those who live chastely and moderately, or of those who, as you say, keep the community together, but who, as I have shown, are the common scourge of the world? Clearly the latter are at fault. For no one becomes irritated when a person philosophizes or when someone is fair and moderate and temperate and despises the things of this life; but they feel this way when someone is wealthy, when he lives in luxury and is greedy and rapacious, when he is wicked and full of countless evils, when he is famous and prospering. These are the things that those who do not believe in God complain about and attack. These are the things that offend the multitude; whereas, for the sake of those who live moderately, not only will they not say anything like this, but

⁴⁷ "Fate" (ἑμπαράν) derives from the verb περπατα and refers to "an allotted portion." Fate was seen as a general scheme ruling the world and often associated with ideas of astral determinism.

⁴⁸ "Fortune" (Τύχη) was a tutelary deity of Antioch. See P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale à Antioche* (Paris, 1955) 192. J. Misson has discussed Libanius' special devotion to Fortune: *Recherches sur le paganisme de Libanius* (Louvain, 1914) 50-66. See, for example, Libanius' *Autobiography* (or. 1.12), where he attributes his "incorruptible virtue" not to his teachers but to "the providence of Fortune" (ἰμωοὶσι Τύχη).

they would even condemn themselves, if they were induced to accuse the providence of God.

And if everyone, or even the majority, wished to live properly, no one would have ever thought to talk in this way, and the chief of these evils would have been avoided, namely to inquire into the origin of evil. For if evils did not exist, or were not apparent, who would have been led to investigate the source of evil and to give rise to the thousand heresies which result from this investigation? For this is how the ideas of Marcion, Manes, Valentinus, and most of the Greeks originated.⁴⁹ But if everyone philosophized, there would be no need to investigate these things. If nothing else, the excellent state of society would teach everyone that we live under a God and King who administers and governs our affairs according to his wisdom and prudence.

This is happening even now, but it is not readily apparent because of the great cloud which these people have spread over the whole world. But if this were not the case, the providence of God would shine forth for all, as if at high noon and in the bright, calm air.⁵⁰ If there existed no law courts, no accusers, no sycophants, no tortures or punishments, no prisons or penalties, no confiscation of property or fines, no fears or dangers, no enmities, no plots, no injuries or hatred, no famine or pestilence, nor any of the other terrible things which could be mentioned, but if everyone lived with proper moderation, what living creature would have doubted God's providence? Not one, of course!

But today it is as if, in the midst of a storm, the ship's pilot is doing his work and saving the ship, but his diligence and experience are not apparent to the sailors on board because of the confusion, fear, and anxiety caused by the threat of catastrophe. Even now God rules this

⁴⁹ Marcion of Sinope (died c. 160) taught at Rome and founded a Christian sect whose teachings included a rejection of the Old Testament and its God and the endorsement of several Pauline letters and an edited version of Luke as his canon. Manes (or Mani) was born c. 216 near Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the capital of the Persian empire. First influenced by the Elkesaites, a Jewish-Christian sect with Gnostic leanings, Manes developed a full-blown Gnostic system which included an uncompromising cosmic dualism, an elaborate salvation myth, and a severe asceticism. Manichaeism spread widely and rapidly. See P. Brown, "The Diffusion of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 59 (1969) 92-103. Valentinus (c. 100-175), a native of Egypt who later taught at Rome, authored the Gospel of Truth and was a leading figure in the second-century Gnostic movement. See B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1987) 217-22.

⁵⁰ A echo of Homer, *Odyssey* 10.94 and Plato, *Phaedrus* 242a. See Fabricius, *Zu den Jügendsschriften* 128, for parallels in Dio Chrysostom, Libanius, and others.

universe, but it is not apparent to most people because of the storm which agitates the world and the confusion which these people more than any others cause. In this way not only do they overthrow the community, but they also destroy piety. It would not be a mistake to call these men the enemies of humanity, who live in a manner opposed to the salvation of others, who by their polluted teachings and impure lives cause those who are sailing with them to suffer shipwreck.

11. But in the monasteries nothing like this can be seen; even if such a storm should arise, they alone live in tranquility, in the harbor, in great security, observing the shipwrecks of others, as if from heaven. For they have chosen a way of life which befits heaven, and they have attained a state inferior in no way to that of angels.⁵¹ Just as among the angels there is no inequality, nor do some enjoy prosperity while others experience misery, but all of them share one peace, one joy, one glory, so it is likewise in the monasteries. No one reproaches poverty, no one exults over wealth. That "yours" and "mine" which overturns and upsets everything is utterly banished. All things are held in common—food, housing, clothing. And why is this surprising, when they even share one and the same soul?⁵²

All are noble with the same nobility, all are servants with the same servanthood, all are free with the same freedom. There you find one wealth for all, the true wealth—one glory, the true glory. For in that life the goods are present, not in name, but in reality. One pleasure, one desire, one hope for all; indeed everything is perfectly regulated as if by a norm and rule. There is no inequality, but order, proportion, harmony, deep and exact agreement, and constant grounds for contentment. Thus everything that they do and suffer is a source of joy and contentment. Only in that life can one see this happen perfectly, nowhere else; not only do they disdain worldly goods, not only have they put away every reason for discord and fighting, not only have they splendid hopes concerning the future, but also they think that whatever happens to anyone of them, for good or for ill, happens to all of them. Sadness disappears more easily when all share equally the burden of the individual; likewise, they have many

⁵¹ The notion that the monastic life imitated the life of angels was a popular theme in monastic literature. See Theodoret of Cyrus, *Curatio affectionum graecarum* 3.91-92 and *Religious History* Prol. 2.3.15, 4.9, 21.3, and 26.23. See also the discussion by R.M. Price in *A History of the Monks of Syria* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1985) xxx-xxxi.

⁵² A passage nearly identical to this can be found in Chrysostom's homily 72.3 on Matthew (PG 58.671-73).

reasons for good cheer, since they rejoice not only over their own good fortune but no less over the good fortune of others.

What would our own life be like, if we all imitated them? For now our world is ruined and corrupted by those who live in a manner far different from these monks. But when you cast your vote for the opposing side, you are acting like a person who says that a lyre, which is perfectly tuned, is useless for music, but who says that another lyre, which is out of tune and broken and ruined by too much loosening or stretching of its strings, is suitable for making music and delighting the audience. We could find no better example of musical ignorance than the person who speaks this way; nor could we find any clearer specimen of envy and misanthropy than those who cast their vote against the monks.⁵³

But what do the more reasonable parents say? "Let them learn letters first," they say, "and then, after they have achieved the power of oratory, let them take up this philosophy; then no one will prevent them." But is it certain that they will reach adulthood at all? For many have passed on, snatched away by an untimely death. But, granting that this is certain, let us assume that they will reach adulthood. Who will be responsible for all of the first part of their life? I am not at all speaking out of a love of disputation, for if someone could give me a guarantee about this, I would not lead them out even after they have been educated. On the contrary, in that case especially, I would order them to remain, and I would not praise those who urge them to take flight. Rather, I would turn them away like common enemies of society, since by hiding the lamps and leading the saviors away from the city into the desert they deprive of the greatest goods those who dwell therein. But if no one will promise us this, what use is it to send them to teachers where they will learn wickedness before letters, and, while they wish to achieve what is less, they will lose what is greater, namely all strength and vigor of soul?

"What then? Shall we completely eliminate education?" you say. I do not say this, but let us not destroy the edifice of virtue nor bury the soul alive. When the soul is self-controlled, no harm will come from a lack of knowledge of rhetoric; but when the soul is corrupted, the greatest damage will result, even if the tongue is quite sharp; indeed,

⁵³ By referring to the "musical ignorance" (ἀμουσία) of the opponents of the monks, Chrysostom is playing on the double meaning of the term "music." The word can refer to an ignorance of music *per se* or to a more general lack of education. A "museum" (μουσεῖον) could refer to a school of rhetoric. Chrysostom's point is that true ignorance is to oppose the monks.

the damage will be greater the more skilled in rhetoric he becomes. For when wickedness gains experience in speaking, it does far worse deeds than ignorance.

"What if, after going there," you say, "in addition to having an idle tongue, they also fall from that virtue?"⁵⁴ What if, after staying here, I reply, in addition to destroying the soul, they make no progress in eloquence in school? And my response is more justified than yours. Why? Because, if in both cases the future is uncertain, in yours it is more uncertain. Why is this? Because the pursuit of rhetoric requires good behavior, but good behavior does not require the assistance of rhetoric. It is possible to live a life of self-control without a literary education, but no one could ever achieve oratorical power without good behavior, since all of his time would be spent in wickedness and immorality.⁵⁵ Therefore, your fears of failure are much more appropriate in the case of rhetorical education, because failures are more frequent there and much greater interests are in danger. And in the monastic life one need only to devote oneself to one matter, but in education two things must be achieved, since it is impossible to achieve one without the other, that is, to learn rhetoric without self-control.⁵⁶ But, if you wish, we will grant that the impossible is possible. What good will come to us from expertise in letters when we are struck with a mortal blow? What harm will come from a lack of knowledge if we live properly in the most important matters? Such opinions are held not only by us, who laugh at pagan wisdom and think that it is foolishness, but also by pagan philosophers. That is why many of them cared little for education. Some even completely despised it, remained ignorant, and spent their entire life in the

⁵⁴ The parents' objection here is not merely rhetorical. In his treatise to the lapsed monk Theodore, Chrysostom tells the story of a young man, Phoenix, who had abandoned his education to join the monks. When he later failed to persevere and wanted to return to civic life, Phoenix was considered unfit "because he had prematurely interrupted his rhetorical studies and was unable to derive any benefit from them" (*Ad Theodorum lapsum* 18; SC 117, 195).

⁵⁵ Nearly identical sentiments are expressed in Chrysostom's homily 21 on Ephesians (PG 62:152): "Study not to make him an orator, but train him to be a philosopher. The lack of the former causes no harm at all, but if the latter is lacking, all the rhetoric in the world will be of no advantage."

⁵⁶ Ibanus likewise stressed the importance of moral rectitude as a prerequisite for accomplishment in rhetoric. See Festugiere, *Antioche païenne et chrétienne* 113-14.

branch of philosophy concerned with behavior.⁵⁷ And yet they lived a brilliant life and became famous. Anacharsis, Crates and Diogenes paid no attention to letters.⁵⁸ Nor did Socrates, some say. We will cite as evidence the words of a man who far surpassed all practitioners of this art and who knew better than anyone the circumstances of Socrates' life. When he led him into the courtroom to make his defense, [Plato] put these words on Socrates' lips:⁵⁹

But from me you shall hear the whole truth—not, I can assure you, gentlemen, in flowery language like theirs, decked out with fine words and phrases. No, what you will hear will be a straightforward speech in the first words that occur to me, as I am confident in the justice of my cause, and I do not want any of you to expect anything different. It would hardly be suitable, gentlemen, for a man of my age to address you in the artificial language of a schoolboy orator.

He said these things to show that it was not because of laziness that he did not learn or practice rhetoric, but because he did not think it was very important. For rhetoric is not appropriate for philosophers, or even for grown men; rather, it is an ostentatious display of adolescents at play.⁶⁰ This is the view of the philosophers, and not only the other philosophers, but also him who far surpassed them all in this matter. For Plato would not allow his teacher to be decked out with that sort of finery since he believed that such decoration was

⁵⁷ Here and in the following paragraphs Chrysostom relies on an ancient philosophical commonplace, the hostility between rhetoric and philosophy. The opposition was developed especially in Plato's *Gorgias*. Among Chrysostom's contemporaries, Synesius of Cyrene in his *Dio* made abundant use of this commonplace.

⁵⁸ Anacharsis, Crates, and Diogenes were revered figures among the Cynics. A recent discussion, with an edition and translation of letters ascribed to these figures, can be found in A. Malherbe, *The Cynic Epistles* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977).

⁵⁹ Plato, *Apology* 17 bc. Translated by H. Tredennick in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Edited by E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) 4. [Original source: Plato: *The Last Days of Socrates*, translated by Hugh Tredennick (Penguin Classics, 1954, 1959).] Hugh Tredennick, 1954, 1959. Reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.] Fabricius, *Zu den Jugendchriften* 138, has pointed out that the same passage of Plato is quoted by Theodoret of Cyrus in his *Curatio affectionum graecarum* 1.30 and by Isidore of Pelusium (PG 78, 1082), who also paraphrases Chrysostom's comment on the text.

⁶⁰ Chrysostom's term φλοτριμία, here rendered as "ostentatious display," can bear both a positive and a negative meaning. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 553, where the word is linked with θυποιδέα ("high spirit") to express an ideal of civic service in a timocratic society as opposed to private money making.

shameful for the philosopher. But these are things better said to a pagan than to a Christian. For if those, who chase after the glory of the crowd and who are unable to become famous from any other source but pagan wisdom, should think this [eloquence] is nothing, would it not be absurd if we so marvel at it and admire it that we despise the essentials in order to achieve it?

12. Therefore, the preceding argument is sufficient for the pagan, but for the Christian we must produce examples from our own side. What kind of examples? Those great and holy persons, those at the beginning, who did not know letters; then, the ones who came after them, who knew letters, but who were not yet skilled in rhetoric; and, finally, after them those who both knew letters and were skilled in rhetoric. The first [Christians] were ignorant in both areas; not only were they not trained in rhetoric, but they were even illiterate. Nonetheless, in those very areas where the power of rhetoric seems to be most necessary, they surpassed the most skilled orators, making the orators look worse than uneducated children. For since persuasiveness is the essence of rhetoric, and since the philosophers have not won over a single tyrant, but since the unlettered and ignorant have overturned the whole world, it is quite clear that the unlettered and ignorant have won the prize of wisdom, not those who have a perfect knowledge of letters and rhetoric. Thus true wisdom and true education is nothing other than the fear of God.⁶¹

And no one should think that I am mandating that children should be unlearned! If someone could guarantee that the essentials would be cared for, I would not object to their receiving an education in addition to this. Just as when the foundations of a house are being shaken and the entire building is in danger of falling down, it would be the height of folly and madness to run to the painters and not to the builders, so, conversely, it would be inappropriate and arrogant to prevent someone from painting the house, as long as the walls are standing securely and firmly.

To show you that I am speaking from the heart, I now will tell you a story which illustrates what I have already proven by the facts. A young man who was very rich once came to live in our city to receive an education in Latin and Greek literature. He had with him a pedagogue whose sole task was to form the young man's soul. I went

⁶¹ The ability of the apostles to spread the gospel, despite their lack of the benefits of Greek culture, is a favorite apologetic argument of Chrysostom. See, for example, his treatise *Quod Christus sit Deus* (PG 48, 830) and our comments above, pp. 48-50.

to this pedagogue (for he was one of those who live in the mountains) and tried to find out why, after having achieved such great wisdom, he had lowered himself to take the position of a pedagogue. But he said that he had only a little time left in that occupation and told us the whole story from the beginning.⁶²

"This young boy," he said, "has a severe and harsh father, who is passionately devoted to worldly concerns, but his mother is moderate, temperate, and chaste and looks only towards heaven. The father, because he was an accomplished soldier, wanted his son to follow in his footsteps; but the mother did not desire or want this, and she even vigorously prayed that it would not happen. She prayed and longed to see him shine in the monastic way of life. But she did not dare to say these things to the father: she feared that if he suspected this he would enslave the child in the bonds of life prematurely, that he would deprive him of this zeal, that he would lead him into the army and into the whole lax way of life which comes from the army, and that he would render the child unable to live an upright life afterwards.

"And so she contrived another stratagem. She called me to her house and told me everything; then she took the child by the hand and entrusted him to me. When I asked why she was doing this, she said that the only way left for us to save the child was for me to agree to take the position of a pedagogue and go there to take charge of him. [She said that] she herself would persuade the father that a training in rhetoric would be beneficial, even when he entered the military. 'If I succeed,' she said, 'you will be able to take him away alone to another place, where you can enjoy full freedom to form him without interference from his father or any of the household, and where you can make him live as if he were in a monastery. But give your approval and promise that you will play along with me in this pretense. I am not speaking about something insignificant: the soul of my child is at stake and in danger! Do not allow him whom I love more than everything to be endangered, but deliver him from the snares, the storms, the waves which surround him on all sides. If you do not wish to grant me this favor, I now call upon God [to stand] between us, and I give witness that I have left nothing undone which

might have affected the salvation of his soul, but I am innocent of the blood of that child! But if it should happen that he suffers the kind of misfortune which can happen to a young man who lives in such great luxury and laxity, it is from you and from your hands that God will require the soul of that child on that great day!'

"Pouring out these words and more than these, with violent and pathetic weeping, she persuaded me to undertake this charge, and with these orders she dismissed me." The mother's plan was not without success. In a short time that noble [monk] trained this child so well and kindled in him so ardent a desire for this life that he cast off everything at once and ran to the desert, so that he needed another bridle to lead him from an excessive zeal to a moderate asceticism. It was feared that by his zeal he might prematurely reveal the plot and that he might stir up serious trouble for his mother, his pedagogue, and monks everywhere. For if his father learned of his flight, he would stop at nothing to drive away those holy men, not only those who took his son into their charge, but all the others as well.

Then I took the child and told him all these things and more. I allowed the desire for this philosophy to remain, indeed I even increased it, but I asked him to live in the city and to apply himself to the study of rhetoric, for in this way he could do the most to benefit his companions and escape the notice of his father as well. I thought this was necessary not only for the sake of the monks, his mother and the pedagogue, but also for the child himself. For if his father had attacked him at the beginning, it is likely that he would have shaken the shoots of philosophy, which were still tender and recently planted. But if a long time went by and he became well rooted, I was quite confident that whatever happened, he could never harm his son.

This is exactly what happened, and my hope was not deceived. When his father attacked him later, after much time had passed, and rushed against him with great force, not only did he fail to make any impact at all on the building, but he even made it appear to be stronger. Many of his fellow students profited so much from his company that they came to share his zeal. Since he always had at home someone to train him, like a statue which constantly profits from the hand of a craftsman, each day he received some addition to his beauty of soul. And what is truly marvelous is that, when he appeared in public, he seemed no different from the crowd. For he had no wild and rough demeanor, nor did he wear an unusual cloak, but he was like the rest in clothing, expression, voice, and all other respects. For this reason he was able to capture many of his comrades within his nets, since on the inside he concealed much philosophy.

⁶² In the following paragraphs Chrysostom borrows classical views on the moral role of the pedagogue and applies these to the monks. See the similar descriptions of the educative function of the pedagogue in Plutarch, *Moralia* 439f and Libanius, or. 58.7-9. See also the emperor Julian's tribute to his pedagogue Mardonius in *Misopogon* 353c. Cf. the comments of Libanius on Julian's pedagogue: or. 12.27 and or. 18.11.

But if you saw him at home, you would think that he was one of those who live in the mountains. His house was arranged according to the discipline of every monastery, where there is nothing but the essentials. All his time was spent in reading the holy books; although he was quite sharp in his studies, he spent only a brief part of his day in pagan learning and devoted the rest to frequent prayer and the sacred scriptures.⁶³ He spent the entire day without food—and not only one or two days, but many days. His nights were spent in the same way: in tears, prayers, and such reading. All these things his pedagogue reported to us in secret. For if the child had found out that any of these things had been disclosed, he would have been quite indignant. His pedagogue said that he had made for himself a garment out of hair and that he slept in it at night, having found that this was a clever way to ensure that he arose quickly. In other ways, too, he perfectly followed the discipline of the monks and continually gave glory to God who had put on him the light wings of this philosophy.

So, then, if someone even now should show me such a soul, if he should provide such a pedagogue, if he should promise that everything else will be taken care of in the same way, I would pray a thousand times that this might happen, even more than the parents themselves. An even greater booty would be ours, since through their life, their age, and their constant company such youth would be able to capture their companions. But there is no one who can promise this, no one who will do it. Since there is no one, it would be the ultimate cruelty to allow someone who is unable to defend himself, who lies exposed to countless wounds causing others to become weaker, to be cut down in the midst of the battle, when he should have been allowed to retreat. Similarly a commander would be punished if he led away from the battlefield those who were able to fight, but ordered those who were wounded, prostrate, and a hindrance to others to remain constantly in the midst of the battle.

13. But since most parents persist in their desire to see their children live a life of letters, as if they knew for certain that they would reach the summit of eloquence, let us not argue about this, let us not say that he will fail to obtain his goal. Rather, we will grant for the sake of argument that the child will fully achieve the goal of his

⁶³ Chrysostom frequently describes a conversion to the ascetic life as a turning from pagan to Christian literature. See *Ad Theodorum lapsus* 1.48 (SC 117.50) and *Ad Stagiritum a daemone vexatum* 1.2 (PG 47.427). See also the description of the monk in the *Comparison Between a King and a Monk*, translated above, p. 71.

study and reach the acme of success. But suppose we are faced with a two fold choice: either he frequents the school rooms and enters the contest for knowledge, or he goes to the desert to struggle on behalf of the soul. Tell me, where is it better to excel? If it should happen in both areas, I am quite in favor of that. But if one or the other must be sacrificed, it is better to choose what is superior.

"Yes," you say, "but how will we know for certain that he will stand firm and persevere and not change for the worse, for many have fallen?" But how do we know that he will not stand firm and persevere, for many have stood firm, even more than have fallen? Therefore, we must be encouraged by the success of the latter, rather than discouraged by the failure of the former. But why are you not afraid of failure in the matter of rhetorical studies, where there is the greatest reason to fear? For among the monks only a few out of the many have failed, whereas in rhetorical studies only a few out of the many have succeeded.

And this is not the only reason, but there are many other reasons to fear in regard to rhetoric. The child's lack of ability, the ignorance of teachers, the negligence of pedagogues, the father's want of leisure, the inability to pay fees and salary, the difference of characters, the wickedness, envy and ill will of his fellow students, and many other things will deter him from his goal. And this is not all, but even after reaching the goal, there will be further obstacles. For when he has overcome everything and reached the pinnacle of education, if he has not been prevented by any of these obstacles, other traps still lie in wait for him. The ill will of rulers, the jealousy of fellow workers, the difficulty of the times, the lack of friends, and poverty frequently frustrate his ultimate success. But it is not this way among the monks; there only one thing is necessary—a noble and good desire; if this is present, nothing can prevent him from reaching the summit of virtue.

Would it not be unjust, therefore, to fear and tremble when the best hopes are clear and near at hand, and yet, when such hopes are rather remote and hindered by many obstacles, not to fear but to have even greater confidence when the difficulties are greater and more manifest? When it comes to rhetoric, why should one ignore the misfortunes which often happen and look only at the successes which seldom come about, but in the case of the monks do the opposite? Why acknowledge only the misfortunes, where there is great hope for true goods, but where the hope concerns opposite things, to consider only the successes? However, in the case of rhetoric, just when everything has worked out to his benefit, frequently an untimely death strikes

him at the moment of his success and snatches away the athlete after his countless labors before he receives his crown. But in the monastic life, even if this should happen in the middle of his struggles, he will depart in the greatest splendor, with an especially beautiful crown.

If, then, you fear the future, you should especially fear it in the case of rhetoric, where there are many obstacles to his reaching the end. When it comes to rhetoric, you sit waiting a long time, looking only to the end, and paying no attention to what happens in between, such as the expenses, hardships, and uncertainty. But when it comes to the monastic life, although the child has not yet entered the front door, although he has not yet taken hold of this beautiful philosophy, you immediately are afraid and tremble and admit thoughts of despair.

Earlier you yourself said to me: "What then? Is it impossible for the person who lives in the city and has a house to be saved?" If, therefore, he can be saved with a city and a house and a wife, how much more is this possible without these things! For it would be a contradiction to be confident of salvation, even when one is enslaved to worldly business, and yet, when one is free of all this, to tremble and fear that an illustrious life is impossible without these things. If, as you say, the person who lives in the city can be saved, how much more is this possible when he dwells in the desert. Why, then, are you afraid that this is impossible in the monastery, but you are not afraid when it comes to rhetoric, where there should be greater fear?

14. "But it is not the same," you say, "when a person in the world sins and when someone does so who has dedicated himself once and for all to God. They do not fall from the same height; therefore, their wounds are not equal." You certainly deceive yourself and are greatly mistaken if you think that there is one set of requirements for the person in the world and another for the monk. The difference between them is that one is married and the other is not; in all other respects they will have to render the same account. For the person who becomes angry with his brother without cause, whether he is a person in the world or a monk, will offend God in the same manner. The person who looks lustfully at a woman, no matter what his state of life, will be punished in the same way for that fornication. And, if we might be allowed to add an argument from our own reasoning, the person in the world will suffer a more severe punishment. For it is not the same thing for the man who has a wife and who enjoys such consolation to be brought to ruin by a woman's beauty, and for a man who has withdrawn from all this help to be conquered by sin. Similarly, the person who swears, no matter what state of life he is in, will be condemned in the same way.

When Christ gave prescriptions and laws about these matters, he did not make any distinction, nor did he say, "If a monk should swear, the oath is wicked, but if he is not a monk, it is not the same." No, he spoke simply and at one time to all people: *I say to you, do not swear at all*.⁶⁴ Again, when he said: *Woe to you who laugh*,⁶⁵ he did not add "to you monks," but he legislated simply and for all. In all the other great and marvelous commandments he did the same. When he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, and blessed are those who for his sake hear evil spoken and unspoken from the pagans,"⁶⁶ he did not specify either monk or secular by name; this distinction was introduced by human speculation.

Nor do the scriptures know anything like this, but they want everyone to live the life of monks, even if they should happen to have wives. Listen to what Paul says (and when I speak of Paul, I speak of a second Christ). Writing to men who had wives and who were raising children, he demanded of them all the perfection which is proper to the monks. Forbidding all luxury with respect both to clothing and to food, he wrote these words: *Women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire*.⁶⁷ And again, *she who is self-indulgent is dead, even while she lives*.⁶⁸ And again, *if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content*.⁶⁹ What more than this could anyone ask of the monks?

When he was instructing others to control their tongues, he again gave strict regulations, such as even monks find it difficult to obey. Not only did he forbid lewd behavior and foolish speech, but even jocularity; not only did he prescribe anger and wrath and bitterness, but he even banished shouting from the mouths of believers. For he said: *Let all anger and wrath and shouting and slander be put away from you, along with all malice*.⁷⁰ Do these seem like small matters to you? Wait a moment and you will hear much greater commandments which he addressed to all concerning the pardoning of injuries: *Let not*

⁶⁴ Matthew 5:34.

⁶⁵ Luke 6:25.

⁶⁶ A paraphrase of Matthew 5:3-12.

⁶⁷ 1 Timothy 2:9.

⁶⁸ 1 Timothy 5:6.

⁶⁹ 1 Timothy 6:8.

⁷⁰ Ephesians 4:31.

the sun, he says, *go down on your anger*.⁷¹ *See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all*.⁷² And again, *Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good*.⁷³ Do you see how he extends philosophy and forbearance to reach the highest possible point?

Listen to what he prescribes concerning love, the chief of goods. After extolling it and speaking of its great virtues, he declared that he demanded of people in the world the same love which Christ demanded of his disciples. Just as the Savior said that the greatest love was to lay down one's life for one's friends, so Paul hinted at the same thing, saying: *Love does not insist on its own way*.⁷⁴ and he commanded that they should pursue this kind of love. If this were all that he said, it would be sufficient proof that he demands of people in the world the same behavior which is required of the monks. For the love, which in this passage he describes partially, is the bond and root of much virtue. What could a person seek which is greater than this philosophy?

For when he commands us to be above anger, wrath, noise, love of money, gluttony, extravagance, vain glory and other worldly pomp, and to have nothing in common with the earth, when he demands that we put to death our members, it is quite clear that he demands of us the same perfection which Christ demanded of his disciples and that he wishes us to be dead to sin, as if we were already dead and buried. That is why he says: *For he who has died is free from sin*.⁷⁵ There are even places in his exhortations where he urges us to imitate Christ, and not only the disciples. Whenever he exhorts us to love, and not to remember injuries, and to be moderate, he produces the example of Christ. Therefore, when Paul orders us to imitate not only the monks, not only the disciples, but Christ himself, when he decrees the greatest punishment for those who do not imitate them, how can you say that this [way of life] is a greater height? For all people must reach the same point! And this is what overturns the whole world, the idea that only the monk is required to show a greater perfection, while the rest are allowed to live in laxity. But this is not true! It is not! Rather, he says, the same philosophy is demanded of all. And I myself

would affirm this, most vehemently, indeed, not I, but the One who is to judge us.

If you are still surprised and in doubt, come again, let us flood your ears with the same streams, so that all the wickedness of your unbelief might finally be washed away. I will demonstrate my case from the punishments to be inflicted on the day of judgement. The rich man was punished so severely, not because he was a cruel monk, but because (if I must express my personal view), being a worldly man who lived in wealth and purple raiment, he neglected Lazarus in his extreme poverty. Moreover, I would add no qualification at all, but I would simply say that he was punished so severely in the fire simply because he was a cruel man.

And the virgins were ejected from the bridal chamber because they were deficient in charity. And if I might again express my own opinion, not only did they not receive greater punishments because of their virginity, but perhaps their punishments were even milder because of that. For they were not told, *Depart to that fire prepared for the devil and his angels*,⁷⁶ but only, *I do not know you*.⁷⁷ But if someone should say that the two passages mean the same thing, I will not contradict him. For at the moment my concern is to demonstrate that the monastic life does not incur harsher punishments and that people in the world are subject to the same punishments when they commit the same sins as the monks. The person who was clothed in the soiled garments, and the one who demanded a payment of one hundred denarii did not suffer what they suffered because they were monks; the former perished because of fornication, and the latter because of his refusal to grant pardon.⁷⁸ And if you make a review of all those in the gospels who were punished, you will see that they received their penalties only in proportion to their sins.

And what is true of the punishments is also true of the counsels. For when Christ said: *Come to me all who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls*,⁷⁹ he said this not solely to monks, but to the entire human race. When he commanded that one should enter through the narrow gate, he addressed this not only to the monks, but to all people. And when

⁷¹ Ephesians 4:26.

⁷² 1 Thessalonians 5:15.

⁷³ Romans 12:21.

⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:5.

⁷⁵ Romans 6:7.

⁷⁶ Matthew 25:41.

⁷⁷ Matthew 25:12.

⁷⁸ Cf. Matthew 18:23-35.

⁷⁹ Matthew 11:28-29.

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he commanded everyone to hate their souls in this world, and when he delivered all the other precepts, he did likewise.

But when he is not speaking to everyone or legislating for everyone, he makes this clear to us. For example, when he spoke about virginity, he added: *He who is able to receive this, let him receive it* 80 And he did not add "all," nor did he phrase this in the form of a commandment. And Paul did the same, for in all respects he appears to imitate the Teacher. When dealing with the same subject, he said, *Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord*.⁸¹ Therefore, I think that not even the most quarrelsome and impudent person will deny that both the person in the world and the monk are required to reach the same height and that both will receive the same wounds when they fall.

15. Now that this has been demonstrated clearly, let us examine another point: who is likely to fall more easily? Certainly, in this matter there is no need for an examination. The person who has a wife will practice self-control more easily, because he enjoys great consolation. But in the other matters it is not so clear. Moreover, even when it comes to self-control, we see more married people failing than monks. For the number of monks who leave the monasteries to marry is not as great as the number of married persons who rise from the marriage bed to fornicate. Now if married people fall so frequently where the contests are easy for them, what will they do in the face of the passions which torment them more than the monks? Carnal desire affects the monks more violently since they do not have intercourse with women. But the other passions cannot even approach the monks, whereas they violently attack people in the world and turn them upside down.

If, then, when they are faced with a more violent combat, the monks conquer more frequently than those who do not suffer in this way, it is clear that they will prevail much more easily in other matters where they are not so troubled. The love of money and the desire for luxury, power, and all the other goods are naturally conquered more easily by the monks than by people in the world. In warfare we say that the battle is lighter where the casualties are few and rare, not where the dead continuously fall one after the other; so, too, we should have the same opinion in these matters. Avarice will be conquered more easily, not by the person who is caught in the midst

of worldly activity, but by the one who lives in the mountains. The former will more easily be vanquished, and once vanquished by avarice, he must be numbered among the idolaters. But if the monk has money, he would not neglect his household, but he would readily provide everything for them; the person in the world, however, will not only neglect them, but will also mistreat them no less than he would strangers. This second kind of idolatry is far worse than the first.

Why should I mention all the other vices which are easy for the monks to conquer, but which strike people in the world with great violence? Why, then, do you not fear and tremble when you are leading your son to a place where he will more quickly be captured by evil? Or does it seem to you that it is a small matter to be an idolater, to be worse than unbelievers, to deny the service of God through his conduct? But those who are enslaved to the world are more subject to these things than are the monks. Do you see that your fear is only an excuse? If it were necessary to fear, one should fear not for those who are escaping the waves, or for those who are hastening into the harbor, but for those who are being tossed in the storms and gales. Shipwrecks happen more quickly in the world, because the sources of trouble are more numerous and because those who must resist them are lazier. But in the monastic life there are no such floods, but there is a great calm and a greater zeal on the part of those who have to struggle. This is why we draw them into the desert, not simply that they may put on a sackcloth, wear a collar, or lie among ashes, but above all else that they may flee evil and choose virtue.⁸²

"What, then?" you say. "Will all married people perish?" I do not say this, but they must expend greater effort if they wish to be saved, because of the constraint imposed on them. For the person who is free of bonds will run more easily than the one who is enchained. Will the latter then receive a greater reward and more glorious crown? Not at all! For he placed this constraint upon himself when he was free not to. Therefore, since we have clearly demonstrated that we bear the same responsibilities as the monks, let us run upon the easier road; let us lead our sons upon it; let us not throw them into the sea, let us not lead them into the depths of evil, as if we were their enemies and opponents.

⁸⁰ Matthew 19:12.

⁸¹ 1 Corinthians 7:25.

⁸² Such unusual practices as the wearing of chains and iron collars was not uncommon among the Syrian monks. See Theodore, *Religious History* 3.19, 4.6, and *passim*. These eccentricities earned the ridicule of the emperor Julian: ep. 89B.288b.

If other people acted like this, it would not be so terrible. But when it is the parents, who have enjoyed a full worldly life, who have learned from experience that earthly pleasures are cold, when it is they who are so mad that they lead others to these pleasures, when they are too old to indulge themselves, when it is they who should have proclaimed themselves miserable because of their prior experiences, but who instead throw others onto the same road, when they themselves are already close to death, judgment, and punishments, what excuse will be left to them, what pardon, what pity? They will pay the penalty not only for their own sins, but also for the wicked deeds of their children, whether or not they succeed in upsetting them.

16. But perhaps you long to see your children's children? How is this, when you are not yet parents yourselves? For the act of begetting does not a parent make. And this is agreed upon by those parents who, when they see their sons reach the height of wickedness, reject and disown them as if they were not their own, and neither nature, nor birth, nor any such bond can restrain them. Therefore, those who are far inferior to their children with respect to philosophy should no longer be considered parents; only when they also have given birth to them in this way should they desire grandchildren; only then will they be able to see them. For the monks also have children; they are born *not of flesh and blood nor of the will of man*, but they have been begotten of God.⁸³ Such children as these have no need to torment their parents over money, or marriage, or any such thing; on the contrary, they allow them to be free of all care and provide them with a greater pleasure than their natural parents enjoy. They are not born and raised for the same purposes as natural children, but for a much greater and more splendid destiny. Thus they delight their parents even more.

Besides these considerations, I also will add one more: it is not unreasonable that those who disbelieve in the resurrection should grieve about having descendants, since this is the only consolation left to them. But we, who think that death is a sleep, who have been taught to despise all things in this life, what pardon would we merit if we mourned about such matters and desired to see children and to leave them behind in this place, from which we are hastening to depart and in which we groan when we are present? This is what we would say to those who are more spiritual. But if there are some who

are lovers of the body, who are quite attached to the present life, I would say this to them: first, it is not certain that a marriage will produce children at all; second, if children do come, there will be even greater discouragement. For the happiness which children bring us is far outweighed by the grief which comes from the daily care, anxiety, and fear which they cause.

"And to whom," you say, "will we leave our fields, houses, servants, and gold?" For I also hear you lamenting about these things. The child who previously was to inherit these goods will now be a much safer guardian and master of the property than before. Previously many things threatened to ruin his property: moths, the length of time, robbers, sycophants, jealous persons, the uncertainty of the future, the unstable character of human affairs, and ultimately death would have robbed your son of both his money and these possessions. But now he has stored his wealth beyond all this: he has found a safe place where none of the obstacles we have mentioned can intrude. This place is heaven, which is free of all treachery, more fertile than any land, a place where those who have deposited their wealth are allowed to reap the fruit of this deposit. Since this is the case, there is no need for you to make these complaints; but if your child wanted to live in the world, then you should lament and complain: "To whom shall we leave our fields, our gold and the rest of our goods?" Now our dominion over these goods is so extensive that not even after death will we lose control over them, but we will enjoy their fruit most when we have gone to the next life.

But if you wish to see someone who is master of his goods even in this life, you also could see this happen more to the monk than to the person in the world. Who, tell me, is the more lordly: the one who spends and gives with great fearlessness, or the one who does not dare to touch anything on account of his parsimony, but who hoards these goods and keeps away from his own property as if it were another's? The one who spends rashly and without purpose, or the one who does this only when necessary? The one who sows on earth, or the one who plants his seeds in heaven? The one who is not allowed to give all his goods to whomever he wishes, or the one who is free of all who demand such high taxes? The farmer and the businessman are set upon from all sides by many who compel them to pay tribute, each one demanding part of their property. But you would never see anyone threatening him who desires to give to the needy; thus, even in this life he is more lordly.

If he spends his money on prostitutes, gluttony, parasites, and flatterers, if he puts his glory to shame, destroys his salvation, and

⁸³ John 1:13.

becomes a buffoon, you say that he is master over what he spends. But if he spends the same amount with great prudence for what is truly glorious, useful, and pleasing to God, do you no longer say this? It is as if, upon seeing someone spend his money on pipes for aqueducts, you would say that he is master of his possessions, but upon seeing someone do this for necessary purposes, you would lament that he does not have power over his own resources. In fact, the persons of whom we speak are more rightly compared, not to those who spend without purpose, but to those who spend and bring ruin upon themselves. The one kind of spending makes a person more illustrious, wealthier, and more secure; the other kind makes him not only shameful and worthy of reproach, but also liable to every type of ruin.

17. "Why is it not possible," you say, "for them to take up this philosophy after marriage and children, when they have reached an old age?" First, who will promise us that we will reach a ripe old age; second, who will promise that we will preserve the same resolve when we have reached old age? For we have no control over that appointed day. Christ taught us this when he said: *The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night*.⁸⁴ Moreover, our thoughts do not always persevere in the same good intention. That is why a certain wise man gave this advice: *Do not delay to turn to the Lord, do not postpone it from day to day, lest you be wiped out while you delay, and at the time of vengeance be utterly destroyed*.⁸⁵

But even if the future were not uncertain, it would not therefore be right to hold your sons back, or to ignore the great harm which results. It would be utterly senseless, when the young man is in need of help and when the enemy is violently attacking him, to force him to engage in worldly affairs and thus to be easily overcome, but to dress him for battle and raise him up, when he has sustained countless wounds and has nothing healthy about him, when he already lies sick and prostrate.

"Exactly," you say, "for then the wrestling will be easy, then the battle will be light, when his lusts have been extinguished." But what kind of battle is it, when there is no one to spar with us? On this account the crowns will not be bright in the end. For *blessed is he who bore the yoke in his youth. He will sit alone and be silent*.⁸⁶ He is worthy of countless praises, blessings, and laudations, who bridle his

nature when it is raging and who preserves the ship at the very height of the storm.

But let us not argue over this point, if you wish, we will grant that the battle will be in the future. If it were in our power to establish the time for the contest, we would do well to defer it. But if we must do battle throughout the whole of life, it is necessary that he begin as soon as he reaches maturity, at about ten years old. From this age a person is responsible for his sins, as we are shown in the story of the boys who were devoured by the bears for laughing at Elisha.⁸⁷ If the combat begins at this age, when the battle threatens to rage against us, how can you determine the time for the contests? If you were master of the devil and could order him not to attack or strike, then this advice of yours would make some sense. But if you allow him to fight and to strike, while ordering me to be quiet and even to submit willingly, what could be worse than this spiteful abuse: to strip the fighter of his arms while the enemy rages and thus to betray him into the hands of his opponent?

Is the young man feeble? For this reason there is need of greater security; and where there is need of security, there is need of greater caution. Such a youth must live in complete peace and tranquility; he must not be thrown into business or tossed into the fray, where there is great confusion and turmoil. But just when the battle is more difficult on account of their age, weakness, inexperience, and the perversity all around them, you draw them into the thick of it as if they were already well accomplished and strong, and you do not allow them to go for training in the deserts. It is as if someone would order a warrior, who could erect countless trophies, to study about warfare in tranquility, but would command a person, who is inexperienced and unable even to glance at a battle, to enter into battle, thereby piling up obstacles which make success more difficult.

Moreover, we must consider that it is not possible for a man to be master of himself when he has a wife, but either of two things must happen: either he has intercourse with his wife throughout his life, if she wishes this; or, if she does not wish this, he falls into adultery by refusing to live in continence.⁸⁸ What need is there to mention the other difficulties which children cause, domestic concerns, which are

⁸⁷ Cf. 2 Kings 2:23-25.

⁸⁸ Monfalcon's text (PG 47:379) differs slightly from Dübner's at this point. I have followed Dübner who adds the negative (μή) before the participle βουλομένης ("if she does not wish this").

⁸⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Chrysostom has mistakenly attributed this saying to Jesus rather than to Paul. He may have been thinking of Matthew 24:43.

⁸⁵ Sirach 5:8.

⁸⁶ Lamentations 3:27-28.

capable of dulling all one's enthusiasm and inflicting great torpor of soul?

18. For this reason it is better to prepare him for battle from the earliest age, when he is in control and unencumbered, not only because of what we already have said, but also, and no less, because of what we are going to say. The person who enters this philosophy towards the end of his life spends all of his time washing himself clean of the sins he accumulated earlier in life, if this is possible, and all of his zeal is consumed in doing this. Often there is not enough time, and the person departs bearing the traces of his wounds. But the person who has stripped for the battle from the earliest age does not spend his time doing this, nor does he sit nursing his wounds, but he receives his rewards immediately. The former is delighted if he wins even the smallest battles, but the latter will erect trophies from the very start of the race and will add victory to victory. Like an Olympic athlete who goes from youth to old age amid proclamations of victory, so he will depart this life, his head crowned with countless crowns.

Where do you wish your son to be? Among those who are able to gaze with great confidence even upon the archangels, or among those who stand with the crowd and occupy the last place? For the last place is all they will be allotted, and this only if they can surmount all the obstacles which we just now have enumerated: if an untimely death does not overtake them, if later on they are not prevented by a wife, if they are not so wounded that their old age is not long enough to enable them to be healed, if they keep throughout their whole life a firm and steady resolve. When all these conditions concur, then they scarcely will be ranked in the last place. Do you wish your son to be among these, or among those who shine in the front of the phalanx?

"Who," you say, "is so cruel that he wants the former rather than the latter for his children? But we miss their company and we want them to be with us." I myself also want this and I pray no less than you, their parents, that they will return to their father's home and make recompense for their upbringing, something they could not find equalled anywhere. But let us not demand this of them now. Is it not absurd that, when we send them to study rhetoric, we banish them from their homeland for a long time, or that when they must learn some type of mechanical skill or something even more vile, we bar them from their own homes and order them to eat and sleep in the home of a teacher; but, when they wish to approach not a human science, but rather the heavenly philosophy, that we immediately draw them back before they can accomplish what we hope for? Even a person who is being taught to walk across a tightrope will spend a long

time away from his family, but when they are learning how to fly from earth to heaven, we shut them in with their parents! What could be more senseless than this? Do you not see that farmers, even if they are in a great hurry to receive the fruit of their labors, would never allow themselves to reap the fruit before its time?

So, then, let us not take our sons away from their sojourn in the desert before it is time; let us allow the teachings to penetrate them and the roots to be firmly planted. Even if they must be raised in the monastery for ten years, or even twenty years, we should not be upset or grieved. The longer he exercises in the gymnasium, the stronger he will be. Or better yet, if you agree, let us not fix a definite time; the only limit should be that which brings to maturity the fruits which have been planted in him. Then he may return from the desert, but not before. For we have nothing to gain from haste in this matter, except that he will never reach maturity. The person who is deprived prematurely of the nourishment which comes from the root ultimately will be useless when the proper time arrives.

In order that this might not happen, let us patiently endure the separation; not only should we not urge them to return, but we should even prevent them if they wish to return before it is time. If he has been trained to perfection, he will be a profit shared by father, mother, home, city and nation; but if he returns incomplete, he will be a laughing stock and an object of reproach, harmful to himself and to others. Let us not create such a monster! Even when we send our sons far from home, we wish to see them again only after they have managed to accomplish successfully that for which they were sent away. But if they return before this, we are more disheartened by their return than gratified, because they have returned fruitlessly. Would it not be the greatest stupidity not to display as much zeal for spiritual matters as we show concerning worldly matters? Is it not foolish to endure separation from our children so philosophically when it comes to worldly pursuits that we hope this separation will be prolonged, if there is some profit to be made, and yet, when it comes to monastic life, to be so cowardly and distressed at their departure that we destroy the greatest goods by this meanness of spirit? And we do this, even though we have these many consolations: not only that they have stripped themselves for greater [contests], that they will

successfully reach the end, and that nothing obstructs their hopes, but also the temporary character of the separation itself.⁸⁹

For when the children are far from home, it is not easy to meet with them, especially if the parents are advanced in age; but in the monastic life it is always possible to visit them. Let us do this when they are not yet able to visit us. We ourselves should walk to them, be with them, talk with them. We will derive great profit and pleasure from this. Not only will we be gladdened by the sight of our beloved children, but we shall return home having received the greatest fruits; indeed, often we will remain with them, conquered by the love of philosophy.

Therefore, let us call them back only when they have become strong and able to render service to others. Let us bring them back only so that they might be a light to all, so that they might be a lamp set upon a lampstand. Then you will see what sort of children you have begotten, what sort of children cause their parents to be considered happy by you. Then you will see the benefits of philosophy, when they heal people suffering with incurable diseases, when they are hailed as benefactors, patrons and saviors to all, when they live like angels among people on earth, when everyone turns to look at them. Moreover, whatever we might say would be nothing compared to what actual experience and the facts themselves can reveal.

If things were as they should be, the lawmakers would not have waited until the young men were grown up to instill fear in them, but they would have educated them and molded them while they were still young. Then there would have been no need for the youth to be threatened later by the laws. But now it is as if a doctor would say nothing to a sick person and would not show him how to be relieved of his illness, but would write out countless prescriptions once the sick man had perished and become incurable. For the lawmakers instruct us only when we already are perverted! But Paul was not this way, but he set teachers of virtue over the young people from the beginning, from the earliest age, to prevent wickedness from gaining a foothold. The best instruction consists, not in first allowing wickedness to gain the upper hand and later seeking how to eliminate it, but rather in doing and working in every way so that our nature becomes inaccessible to evil. That is why I urge you not only not to prevent

⁸⁹ Dübner has emended the text *τὸν αὐτὸν* to read *πρόκαιρον* ("temporary"). Cf. PG 47.380

those who wish to do this, but even to give them assistance, to save the ship, and to make it ready to sail with a favorable wind.

If all of us should adopt this point of view, if we should lead them to virtue above all else, knowing that this is our task and that all other tasks are secondary, such great goods would result that I would seem to be boasting if I should speak about them now. But if someone should wish to know, the facts themselves will teach him well, and he will render great thanks to us, but even more to God, when he sees the heavenly way of life blossoming on earth and the doctrines about the future goods and about the resurrection finding credence here below even among the pagans.

19. Here is the proof that we are not merely boasting. Whenever we speak to pagans about the way of life of those who are in the deserts, they have nothing to say in objection to this, but they imagine that their case is strengthened and that they can argue about the small number of those who live a virtuous life.⁹⁰ But if we grew this fruit in the cities, if good behavior received its beginnings there and had the force of law, if we instructed the children to be friends of God above all else, if we taught them spiritual teachings instead of and above all other things, every reason for sorrow would vanish, the present life would be free of countless evils, and all of us would achieve in this life what is said about the future life—that sadness, grief and groaning are absent. If neither the love of money nor that of vain glory enters us, if we do not fear death, if we believe that neither poverty nor the bearing of evil brings us harm, but rather that it offers the greatest profit, if we know not what it is to be hated or to hate, neither our own passions nor those of others would ever attack us, but the human race would become nearly like the angels.

"But what person," you ask, "has achieved this level of virtue?" Naturally, you do not believe because you live in the cities and are not conversant with the sacred scriptures. But if you knew those who live in the deserts and those who lived long ago, who are mentioned in the spiritual books, you would learn that the monks, and the apostles before them, and before the apostles the just, practiced this philosophy with all perfection. But so that we do not quarrel with you, we will grant that your son will achieve the second or third rank after these; even here he will enjoy no small goods. He will not come before Peter

⁹⁰ For a similar argument see Chrysostom's homily 26.4 on Romans (PG 60.643-44), where he reports the complaint of a pagan that Christians in the city fail to live Christian ideals properly.

or Paul; indeed, he will not come close to them. Is this a reason for depriving him of an honor inferior to theirs? When you talk like this, it is like saying, "Since it is not possible to be a precious stone, let him remain a piece of iron, let him not become silver or gold."

Why, then, do you not adopt this attitude when it comes to profane matters, instead of taking the opposite view? When you send your son to study rhetoric, you do not expect to see him reach the top; nonetheless, you do not deter him from these studies because of this, but you do everything in your power and think it desirable if he should reach the fifth or sixth rank from the top in rhetorical skill. If your sons serve in the emperor's army, you do not at all expect them to reach the rank of provincial governor. But you do not order them to take off the military belt or forbid them to approach imperial office; on the contrary, you do everything possible so that they do not depart from that way of life, thinking that it is enough to see them numbered in the middle ranks.

Why, then, in one case, even if it is not possible for them to reach the higher rank, do you wear yourself out and labor for lesser things, even if the hope for these things is uncertain, but, in the other case, you hesitate and draw back? It is because you have great enthusiasm for what is inferior, but care not the slightest for what is greater; then, being ashamed to admit this, you have thought up excuses and pretexts. If you truly wanted it, none of these things would have prevented you. This is how the matter stands. When a person truly desires something, even if he cannot achieve it all or the highest part, he would choose to reach the middle part, or even what is far below this. And a person who loves wine and other drink, even if he is unable to have wine with an agreeable taste and a rich bouquet, will never disdain more ordinary wine. And, again, the lover of money, if he receives a gift of silver, will be very grateful, even if it is not gold or precious stones.

This is the way desire is: it can dominate and persuade whomever it captures to suffer and endure all things for its sake. Therefore, if your words were not mere excuses, you would have cooperated and lent a hand. A person who wants something to happen will not prevent it from happening, but will do everything to make it happen. When people enter the Olympic games, although they know that only one out of such a great crowd will achieve the victory, nonetheless they labor hard and exert themselves. However, there is a great difference between the athletic example and our own case, not only because the two contests differ in their ends, but because in the case of the Olympics only one person can leave with a victory crown. But in our

case, superiority and inferiority consist, not in whether one receives a crown or not, but in greater and lesser degrees of glory, a glory in which all share.

In short, if we wished from the beginning to mold the children and to entrust them to those who wish to educate them, it would not be unlikely that they would attain the highest rank in the army. For God would not ignore such enthusiasm and zeal, but he would give his assistance and take the statue in hand. With this hand at work, it is impossible that any effort should fail; indeed, it is impossible not to reach the very summit of splendor and glory, if only we do what is in our power. For if women are able to persuade God to cooperate with them in caring for their children, so much more shall we be able to do this, if we wish. In order not to prolong my speech, I will pass over the other women, although there are many to speak of, and we shall call to mind only one of them.

20. There was a Jewish woman named Anna,⁹¹ Anna gave birth to one child and did not expect to have another. Indeed, she had scarcely given birth to him, and this after many tears, for she was sterile. When she saw that her rival frequently insulted her because of this, she did not act as you do, but after bearing that son she allowed him to remain with her only as long as was necessary for him to be weaned. When he no longer needed to be nursed, she immediately took him and offered him up to God, and she ordered him to return to his father's house no longer, but to live continually in the temple of God. Whenever she desired to see him, as a mother does, she did not summon the child to her own house, but she went up to him with his father, keeping her distance from him as if he were a votive offering.

This young man became so noble and great that when God had turned away from the race of the Hebrews because of their profuse wickedness and no longer spoke to them in oracles or appeared in any vision, he won back God's favor through his virtue and persuaded him to supply what had been given previously and once again to restore the prophecy which had vanished. And he was able to do this not when he reached a mature age, but when he was still a small child. As scripture says: *There was no frequent vision and the word [of the Lord] was rare.*⁹² But although this was the situation, God continually delivered oracles to him. Such is always the reward for giving our possessions to God and for disowning all things, not only money and

⁹¹ Anna was the mother of Samuel. See 1 Samuel 1 ff.

⁹² 1 Samuel 3:1.

possessions, but also our very children. For if we are commanded to do this in the case of our own souls, how much more is this the case with everything else.

The patriarch Abraham also did this, indeed something much greater than this, and that is why he received his son back with greater glory. Then do we most truly possess our children when we have entrusted them to the Master. For he will govern them much better than we, since he feels greater concern for them. Do you not see the same thing happening in the homes of wealthy people? For even there the servants who live at an inferior rank with their parents never become very famous or achieve great power. But those children whom the masters have taken from their parents and assigned to serve them and to watch over their treasures, these enjoy greater goodwill and confidence; they are more illustrious than their fellow servants, just as masters are superior to their household slaves. But if human beings are so kind and benevolent towards their servants, much more so is the Infinite Goodness, that is God.

So, let us allow them to serve at a higher rank, by leading them not to a temple like Samuel, but to heaven itself with the angels, with the archangels. For everyone knows that those who have undertaken this philosophy will surely serve and minister with them. And they will govern not only themselves, but also you with greater confidence. For if some people have received some consolation because of their fathers, much more so will fathers be consoled on account of their children. In the first case there is only the privilege of nature, but in the second case there is also the privilege of upbringing, which is much greater than that of nature.

We will confirm both of these for you from the sacred scriptures. Hezekiah was a pious and virtuous man, but he did not have such great confidence from his accomplishments that he could stand against so great a danger. Therefore, God said that he would save Hezekiah because of the virtue of his father. *For I will defend this city to save it, he said, for my own sake and the sake of my servant David.*⁹³ And when Paul wrote to Timothy concerning parents, he said that *they will be saved through bearing children, if they remain in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.*⁹⁴ And scripture praises Job not only because he was just and truthful and reverent, but also because of his concern for his children. But Job's concern was not to gather gold for

them, nor to make them glorious and famous. What was it? Listen to what scripture says: *When the days of the feast had run their course, Job sent for them and sanctified them, and rising early in the morning he offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all, and one calf for sin on behalf of their souls. For Job said in his heart, "It may be that my sons have conceived wicked thoughts against God in their minds."*⁹⁵

What excuse, then, will be left if we dare such things? For Job, who lived before grace and before the Law, and who enjoyed no instruction, exercised such great forethought for his children that he trembled even over uncertain sins. Who, then, will excuse us who live in grace, who have received such great teachers, who possess such great examples and such exhortations, when not only do we not fear when sins are uncertain, but we even think little of those that are certain—and not only think little of them, but even drive away those who wish to correct them? Abraham, as I said above, along with his other virtuous deeds also accomplished this splendid action.

21. Since, then, we have such great examples, let us prepare trustworthy servants and ministers for God. For if the person who nourishes athletes for cities or who trains soldiers for kings receives great honor, how great a reward ought we to receive when we nourish noble and great men, or rather angels, for God? Therefore, let us do everything in order to leave them the wealth of piety as an inheritance, a wealth which lasts and accompanies them when they die, which can provide the greatest benefits not only in this life, but also in the next. For worldly wealth will not travel with you when you depart, and even in this life it perishes before its possessors, and often it causes its possessors to perish. But this other wealth will be safe both in this life and in the next; with great security it will preserve those who possess it.

This is how matters stand. The person who prefers earthly goods to spiritual ones will be deprived of them both. But the person who longs for heavenly goods by all means also will receive earthly ones. This is not my own word, but the word of the Lord who provides these things. *Seek, he says, the kingdom of heaven and all these things will be added to you.*⁹⁶ What could be equal to this honor? Take care, he says, for spiritual things, but give to me all that is your own. God acts just like a loving father who takes upon himself the care of his household and

⁹³ 2 Kings 19:34.

⁹⁴ 1 Timothy 2:15.

⁹⁵ Job 1:5.

⁹⁶ Matthew 6:33.

charge over the servants and everything else, but who urges his son to devote himself solely to philosophy.

Let us obey, therefore, and let us seek the kingdom of God, and thus we will see our children approved everywhere, and we ourselves will be famous with them; we will enjoy present goods, if only we love the future and heavenly ones. If you obey these words, you will see a great reward, but if you contradict and refuse to obey them, you will see a most bitter punishment. For there can be no recourse to excuses, nor can anyone say that he had no one to teach him these things. Even before our speeches, there was no room for such an excuse, since nature has an accurate ability to judge what is good and what is not good, since this philosophy is present everywhere, and since the evils in this life are sufficient to lead to the desert even those who are greatly enamored of this life. Even if we had been silent, as I said, there would have been no room for excuses; but this is much more the case now after these long speeches and after such an exhortation, both from the facts at hand and even more clearly from the sacred scriptures.

Even if it were possible that those who remain at home ultimately might not perish, but could obtain the lowest rank of salvation, we would certainly not escape punishment if we prevented those who are hastening to enter upon a more diligent way of life, and if we detained in worldly affairs those who are hastening to fly into heaven. But since this is impossible, since destruction is absolutely inevitable, and since the danger concerns the ultimate things, what pardon will we have, what excuse, when we have taken upon ourselves the most severe chastisements, not only for our own sins, but also for the sins later committed by our children? For I do not think that they will be punished for their own failures, after they have been dragged down into this flood, as much as you who brought them into this necessity. For if it is fitting that he who scandalized one person be thrown into the sea with a millstone, what punishment and torture will be enough for those who display this cruelty and harshness towards their own children?

Therefore, I exhort you to put away contentiousness and to be fathers of children who are philosophers. You must not give the excuse which so many people give. What is that? "We have prevented them," they say, "because we knew that they could not attain the goal." Even if your foreknowledge were certain and not a mere conjecture—for many who were expected to fall have stood firm—even if you were quite sure in your foreknowledge, it would not be necessary to lead them out. For if we take those who are likely to fall

and throw them to the ground, this certainly does not excuse us; on the contrary, it is this especially which condemns us. Why did you not allow your son's fall to happen as a result of his own laziness, instead of anticipating and seizing the sin beforehand and casting the whole thing upon your own head? Rather, you should not have allowed it. Why did you not do everything to ensure that your son would not fall? Therefore, it is precisely because you knew that he would fall that you are especially worthy of punishment. For the person who has this foreknowledge is required not to strike him down, but to lend a hand and to show greater zeal so that the one who is about to fall might stand firm nobly, whether he ultimately stands firm or not. For we must fulfill all that is in our power, even if others take no profit from us. "To what end," you say, "and for what reason?" So that God will call them, and not us, to account. God himself also said this when he accused the person who had done nothing with his talent. *You ought to have invested my money with the bankers, he said, and at my coming I should have received it back with interest.*⁹⁷

So, then, let us obey the one who gives us this advice so that we might escape the punishment. For we cannot deceive God as we do men, for he scrutinizes hearts and brings everything out into the open and holds us responsible in every way for the salvation of the children. For if the man who did not invest the money was punished so severely, what will happen to the one who prevents those who wish to make the investment? Even if the children are not cast down into the midst of worldly affairs by our counsel, but rather nobly resist the assault and take to the mountains once again, those who wished to impede them will receive the same punishment. For just as the person who leads them to philosophy receives a complete reward, whether or not they fall (for he has done everything in his power), so, too, the person who wishes to destroy them, whether or not he succeeds, will receive the same punishment (for he likewise did everything in his power). And so, even if you are unable to upset and destroy the noble purposes of the children, nonetheless merely for attempting this you will pay as great a penalty as those who succeeded in destroying them.

Therefore, keeping all this in mind, and putting aside all excuses, let us strive to be fathers of noble children, builders of Christ-bearing temples, trainers of heavenly athletes, preparing them for combat, guiding them aright, working for their benefit in every way, so that

⁹⁷ Matthew 25:27.

we might share their crowns in the next life. But if you remain obstinate, the children, should they be noble, will enter this philosophy against your will and they will enjoy all good things; but you yourselves will suffer countless punishments, and then you will praise what we have said, when it is too late for this praise to help you.

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